

GOVERNING BOARD

PRESIDENT:

Julie MacSwain

1902 Primrose Place,
Hudson, WI 54016
(651) 472-2453
juliemacswain@gmail.com

PRESIDENT-ELECT:

Vacant

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:

Arnold D. King

1900 Canaveral Ct.
Granbury, TX 76048-4370
(817) 578-8177
arnolddking@hotmail.com

SECRETARY: Jack R. Carlson

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

TREASURER: Donna Beggs

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

REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS

EAST: Melvin Womack

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

WEST: Bill Ward

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

SOUTH: William Kuenstler

79 Gulf Winds Way
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459
(850) 468-0691
bkuenstler@gmail.com

MIDWEST: Rebecca Fletcher

2888 Colony Lake West Dr.
Plainfield, IN 47168
(317) 371-6944
becky_fletcher@sbcglobal.net

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR:

Paul Benedict

190 Nittany South Way
Stephens City, VA 22655
(202) 578-8226
soilwarden@verizon.net

EDITOR: Jerry Bernard

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

NOTES FROM THE POTOMAC:

Craig Derickson

7100 S 31st Place,
Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 560-5804
craig.derickson@yahoo.com

SWCS LIAISON

Cheryl K. Simmons

1055 Hazeltine Rd
Moscow, ID 83843
(817) 542-2725
cksoil@aol.com

SR. CONSERVATIONIST

CHRONICLER: Vacant

WEBMASTER:

Courtney Allen

SWCS Intern with ARCSE
courtneymarie.allen@yahoo.com



NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Retired Conservation Service Employees

Vol. 51, No. 2 March/April 2024

The **ARCSE Newsletter** is published bi-monthly by the
Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE)
1902 Primrose Place, Hudson, WI 54016

Website: www.arcse.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Julie MacSwain, ARCSE President

Greetings!

On behalf of your ARCSE Board and Advisors, I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in our recent ARCSE survey. This was the first time that ARCSE has ever reached out to the ARCSE membership for input. A special "thank you" goes to **Frank Clearfield**, a retired NRCS social scientist and ARCSE member, who volunteered to help develop the survey.

The ARCSE Volunteer and Communications Survey results are shown later in this newsletter and are also posted on the ARCSE.org website.

Note: we are looking for someone to fill the "President-Elect" position on the ARCSE Governing Board. If you want to volunteer or know of someone who would be a good candidate, please contact Julie MacSwain, President.

NOTES FROM THE POTOMAC

—Craig Derickson, retired USDA-NRCS

There is not much news from Washington DC about legislation that has been passed or action on governance issues. Daily news reports continue to expose the deep political divide between the parties and a lack of activity on critical issues the country is facing. For example, no fiscal year (FY) appropriations bill has been passed, and the next lapse of funding for the government is March 1st. There is no legislation on foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel, or Taiwan, and no legislation for immigration reform to address the southern border. And finally, there has not been much work on a new Farm Bill that is set to expire by the end of the year.

According to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, on Thursday, Jan. 18th, the House and Senate both passed a third continuing resolution (CR) for fiscal year 2024 to avoid a partial government shutdown at midnight on Friday, Jan. 19th, and the President signed the bill. The new measure would extend the "laddered" approach from the previous CR, with the first set of appropriations bills expiring on Friday, March 1st: Agriculture, Energy-Water, Military Construction-VA, and Transportation-HUD. The second set of appropriations bills would expire a week later, on Friday, March 8th: Commerce-Justice-Science, Defense, Financial Services-General Government, Homeland Security, Interior-Environment, Labor-HHS-Education, Legislative Branch, and State-Foreign Operations bills. The CR would also extend several expiring policy deadlines to March 8th. See more at: <https://www.crfb.org/blogs/upcoming-congressional-fiscal-policy-deadlines>.

Unfortunately, this uncertainty likely means there will continue to be stress over lapses in funding and a government shutdown for federal employees in the weeks ahead. And, regardless of the imminent budget challenges that Congress must deal with for FY24, they will soon start collecting requests for the FY25 budget that begins on October 1st, 2024.

Farm Bill on Hold Until the Budget is Resolved

The February 2024 newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), the CONSERVOGRAM, included an article by **Rachel K. Owen**, SWCS Senior Advisor, with insight on reasons for delays to a new Farm Bill. Rachel reported:

"The farm bill is a large package of proposals governing USDA programs and priorities. The legislation is reauthorized every five years, and the current farm bill was set to be renewed in 2023. The House and Senate Agriculture committees have been holding hearings about the farm bill since early 2022, but despite their early work, neither the House nor Senate have released a draft of the farm bill yet. In late 2023, Congress extended the 2018 Farm Bill for one year, giving Congress until the end of 2024 to pass the reauthorization.

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED CONSERVATION SERVICE EMPLOYEES

One key factor delaying the farm bill is the federal budget process. It is unlikely that Congress will be able to consider the next farm bill until they have passed the FY24 budget.

In the meantime, Democrat and Republican leaders of the Agriculture committees are working to reconcile some substantial differences in priorities, including:

- Incorporating the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) conservation funding
- Bolstering the farmer safety net through commodity and crop insurance support
- Maintaining support for federal nutrition programs
- Creating new programs and increasing support for current programs under a tight budget reality

As the 2024 election approaches, it will become more challenging for Congress to pass a farm bill this year. We will continue to share updates about the farm bill and highlight opportunities for conservation professionals to share their perspectives.” See more at:

https://www.swcs.org/static/media/cms/February_2024_390FD3DEC9657.pdf.

A Push for Regenerative Agriculture Policy in the Farm Bill

An organization called Forum for The Future has created a series of documents to describe the “Growing our Future initiative (GOF)” to accelerate interest in shifting public policy toward a regenerative agriculture system in the US. The documents are referred to as a toolkit and are intended to provide a road map for organizations and coalitions to understand how new legislation could help to “fuse two often disparate policy priority areas: the protection of ecosystems and climate and the impact of agriculture policy on the people and communities who grow the nation’s food.”

The report entitled “Areas of Momentum for The Farm Bill and Beyond: Advancing a Just Transition to Regenerative Agriculture Systems,” describes current opportunities to change agricultural policy with the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. The report suggests strategies for companies and coalitions to leverage their collective resources to advance policy that prioritizes ecosystem health, community well-being, and climate solutions. The group is working to pull together organizations to collaborate on identifying policies that will support the transition to regenerative agriculture. The group also hopes to address social inequities in the system and to ensure access to policy programs for all food producers, especially historically underserved farm communities. For more see <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/scaling-regenerative-agriculture-in-the-us>.

Many States Have Soil Health Policy

An increasing number of states have passed legislation with the goal of supporting healthy soil, clean water, and clean air. It is challenging to get national numbers, but it appears as many as 30 states have state coalitions or alliances to promote healthy soils, cover crops, nutrient management, and livestock grazing systems. Several states also provide state-funded incentives to producers to implement soil health practices on farms and grazing lands.

A new website is tracking soil health policy across the US with the goal of supporting state healthy soil activities and helping enact state policy. According to their website, this effort was “launched by volunteer organization ‘Nerds for Earth’ and climate-focused nonprofit ‘Soil4Climate,’ and with support from the ‘Carbon Project’.” The site is built on crowd-sourced data with curators from each state serving to update and maintain it. With the stroke of a mouse one can find healthy soil and agriculture policies broken down by each state, a legislative database for the 2019 session, and other related resources, such as policy guidance, technical guidance, agricultural markets, scientific papers, grant funding, and more.” See more at: <https://nerdsforearth.com/state-healthy-soils-policy/>.

In May 2023 a group of committed individuals in Nebraska decided to establish an independent, non-profit Soil Health Coalition. Retired NRCS State Conservationist **Craig Derickson** is one of the founding members of the Coalition. The purpose of the Coalition is to advance producer-centered education, outreach, and adoption of soil health principles to build resilient farms, ranches, and communities across Nebraska. The Coalition is chartered in Nebraska as a non-profit organization and has submitted required material to the IRS to become a tax-exempt 501c3 organization.

Nebraska State Senator **Tim Gragert** (retired NRCS) introduced LB 243 in 2019 to achieve more rapid and widespread adoption of soil health practices with multiple environmental benefits. The Legislature passed the bill and created a 17-member Healthy Soils Task Force (HSTF) to develop a Nebraska Healthy Soils Initiative. The task force concluded that two significant barriers to adoption of healthy soil management practices by agricultural producers are uncertainty of the positive economic return on investment in healthy soil management practices and the lack of education and information available to a broader audience. The Coalition is now seeking funding through grant applications to bring on staff to carry out the goals of the Coalition. The Coalition will soon have a website and will be conducting fund raising activities. See the Task Force report at:

https://nda.nebraska.gov/healthysoils/HSTF_FinalReport.pdf.

USDA Focus on Climate-Smart Agriculture

USDA is investing more than \$3.1 billion for 141 projects across the country to address climate-smart agriculture and the reduction of greenhouse gases. USDA defines a climate-smart commodity as an agricultural commodity that is produced using farming, ranching, or forestry practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon.

USDA is also using this effort to secure the meaningful involvement of small and underserved producers. USDA is committed to supporting a diverse range of farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners through Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. This effort will expand markets for America’s climate-smart commodities, leverage the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production, and provide direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. See more at: <https://www.usda.gov/climate-solutions/climate-smart-commodities>.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is expanding its suite of climate-smart agriculture and forestry activities funded through the "Inflation Reduction Act." For fiscal year 2024, NRCS is increasing climate related practices and activities that are eligible for funding through the most popular Farm Bill conservation programs, including EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program). These actions are in response to feedback received from conservation partners, producers, and NRCS staff across the country. NRCS considered and evaluated activities based on scientific literature demonstrating expected climate change mitigation benefits. To learn more, download the list of practices, the Additional Planner Guidance, and the Frequently Asked Questions, or watch the webinar(link is external) at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/climate/climate-smart-mitigation-activities>.

EPA Launches Grant Program to address Green House Gasses (GHG)

On January 14th, 2024, EPA announced the availability of grant funding through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG). Many States and larger cities are now working with stakeholders to develop grant proposals to compete for the available funding. EPA is making available \$4.6 billion of Inflation Reduction Act funding to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. See more at: <https://www.epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act>.

The Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) program provides \$5 billion in grants to States, local governments, tribes, and territories to develop and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution. Authorized under Section 60114 of the Inflation Reduction Act, this two-phase program provides \$250 million for noncompetitive planning grants and approximately \$4.6 billion for competitive implementation grants. See more at: <https://www.epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>.

79th SWCS International Annual Conference

The 2024 annual meeting of the SWCS will be held July 21–24, 2024, at the Sheraton Hotel in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina with the intention of bringing our conservation family together to witness the region's natural beauty and enjoy one another's company.

The SWCS agenda will feature the latest ideas, technologies, and practices, and foster a dialogue around their adoption. Cutting-edge research and practice developments in soil health, water quality, and resource management will be shared through various workshops, sessions, symposia, tours, exhibits, and demonstrations. Scientists and practitioners will present their work at the field, farm, and watershed scales across an array of private and public arenas. Applications of social theories and examples of successful outreach and education will enable you to identify ways to scale up localized successes. As an attendee, you will also hear about policy and economic developments that build a framework to increase conservation adoption and support future generations." See more on the annual conference at:

<https://www.swcs.org/events/conferences/2024-annual-conference/hotel-and-transportation>

ARCSE Volunteer and Communications Survey

The Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE) developed a survey of their membership to assess their interest in volunteering to mentor newly-hired Natural Resource Conservation Service employees, work as an Earth Team volunteer, and work with the ACES program. Additionally, the survey asked to rate the communications methods ARCSE currently employs to communicate with the membership. See the following link to the [ARCSE.org](https://www.arcse.org) website for more information about the program:

<https://arcse.org/resources/arcse-nrcs-mentoring-program/>.

And for the survey details and results:

<https://arcse.org/2024/01/08/arcse-volunteer-and-communications-survey/>.

Frank Clearfield volunteered to help develop the survey and was assisted by the ARCSE president and her board of directors. The internet survey was sent out to the full 747 ARCSE membership list on December 4th, 2023. Members were given a December 20, 2023 deadline to complete the survey. Reminder emails were sent December 12th and December 18th, 2023. The survey received 242 completed surveys for a 32% response rate. On average, the process took less than 4 minutes for an individual member to complete.

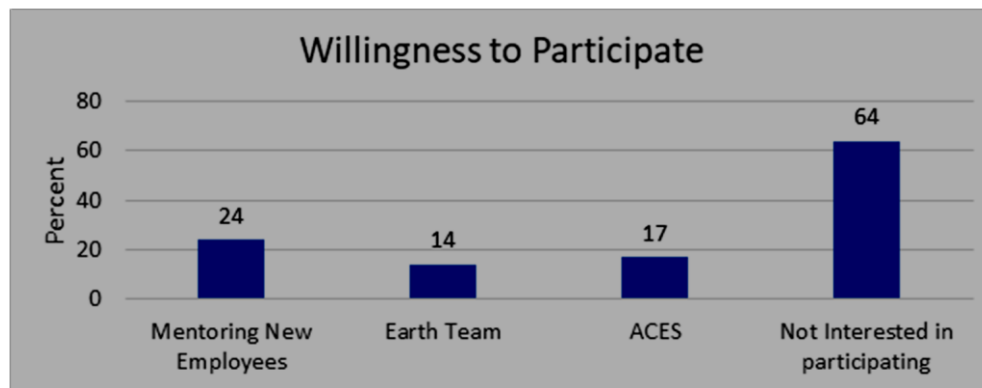
VOLUNTEERING

ARCSE members were asked about their willingness to participate as mentors, as Earth Team volunteers, and with the ACES program. Respondents who answered "yes" were asked to provide their contact information and also to identify the skills they developed during their conservation career. This group then rated ARCSE's communication methods. Those who did not want to volunteer were forwarded past any contact or skill questions and were sent to the communications questions.

RESULTS

Out of the 242 who completed surveys, 60 respondents indicated that they want to be mentors, Earth Team volunteers, and/or ACES employees. The breakdown for these volunteers is: 41 want to be mentors, 28 want to participate with the earth team, and 27 want to participate with ACES. Since they could check "all that apply," 25 want to participate in more than one program. One hundred and fifty-six (156) respondents did not want to participate in any of the programs.

Overall, there were 26 states represented, with the following states having the most volunteers: Iowa (11), Virginia (6), Illinois (5), and Pennsylvania (4). Additionally, Tennessee, Texas, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin each had 3 ARCSE volunteers.



Those respondents who checked that they wanted to volunteer were then asked what work-related skills they possess. They could make multiple selections from a wide range of natural resource conservation, supervisory, and people-oriented areas. The top selected proficiencies were:

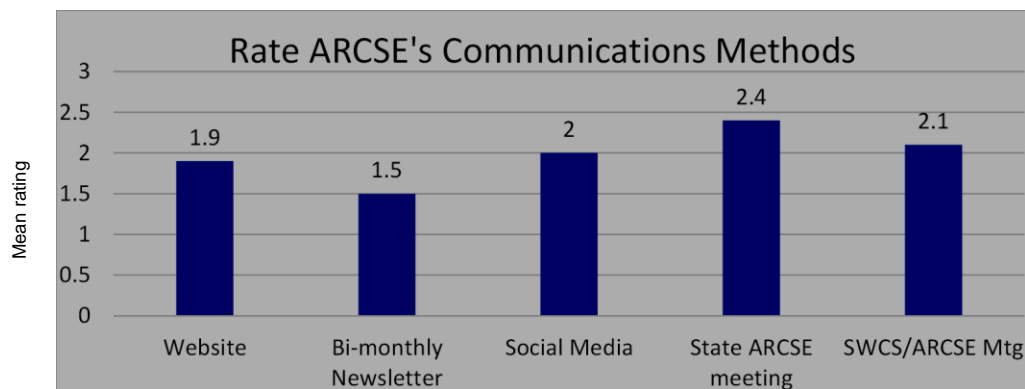
45% Soil conservation	27% Soils
37% Conservation planning	26% People skills
33% Leadership	23% Supervisory skills
29% Engineering	23% Farming and/or ranching experience
29% Watershed planning	

Those respondents who didn't want to volunteer were asked "why?" Sixty-three percent responded to this open-ended question, and they wrote the following as their major reasons:

-Age	-Busy with Church activities
-Lack of Time	-Skills have not kept up
-Personal health issues	-Agency is much different
-Serve as a care giver	

COMMUNICATIONS

All the respondents were asked to rate ARCSE's communication methods. The survey used a scale of 1 to 5 with the gradients as follow: 1= excellent, 2= good, 3= average, 4= poor, 5= very poor. A "mean" or average rating was calculated for each method. Based on the rating scale, the lower the "mean," the more positive the rating.



The results in the chart above show that the bi-monthly newsletter, as the major communications method of ARCSE, is the "tie that binds" the membership to ARCSE. The newsletter is rated 1.5 by the membership, and only 5% selected the "don't know/not applicable" (DK/NA) response. The newsletter is widely known and rated highly. The website, although also rated reasonably high (1.9) is not as well known by the membership, with 39% selecting DK/NA. The three other methods are rated above 2.0, and the State ARCSE meeting was given the highest average rating. Additionally, these three methods had about 60% of the respondents selecting the DK/NA response (i.e., social media – 66%; State ARCSE meeting – 62%; SWCS/ARCSE meeting – 59%).

Summary, Actions, and Recommendations

- This survey identified those retirees interested in mentoring, Earth Team, and/or ACES, and a spread sheet with their skills and contact information was constructed and provided to the ARCSE president.
- To protect confidentiality, the list should be sent to NRCS and ARCSE representatives responsible for their state. The ARCSE state representative can serve as a conduit between their state NRCS staff and the retiree.
- ARCSE staff need to follow up with those retirees who volunteered to ensure that they have been contacted and that this process is successful.

- Even though 24 states and US territories did not have anyone volunteers through the survey, ARCSE members may still be interested in volunteering, and retirees in the state may not be members of ARCSE. Follow-through measures by NRCS and ARCSE need to be developed.
- ARCSE should continue all forms of communications with retirees and use hyperlinks in the newsletter to link to other communication methods to elaborate on topics of interest to the conservation community.
- Only approximately 25% of retirees are ARCSE members; many retirees were not given the opportunity to volunteer through this survey.
 - ✓ Ask states and State Conservationists to get a full list of retirees in their states (if available).
 - ✓ Develop a (similar) short survey to find out if any of those retirees want to volunteer.
 - For example, 3 questions – willingness to volunteer, skills/expertise, contact information.
- Many ARCSE retirees gave age as a reason for not volunteering.
 - ✓ Work with NRCS State Conservationists to acquire information about staff who are soon to retire and ask them about volunteering just before or after they retire.

Mentoring Example

Submitted by Jack Carlson.

Our small group of retired plant material specialists/agronomists resumed our annual botanizing treks after a four-year hiatus, this time the last week in January to south Florida.

We usually contact the PMC and PM specialist in the area, and more often than not, connect with them either at the PMC or another location. **Victor Guerra**, new study leader at the Brooksville PMC, joined us for three days as we botanized Florida scrub and flatwoods and visited the Everglades Agricultural Area south of Lake Okeechobee.

We've done this since 2008 around the country, missing 2020–2023, then resuming last month. Next year in the Southwest.



Salad Greens



From left to right behind Victor Guerra: Larry Holzworth (Montana), Jack Carlson (Colorado), Fred Gaffney (New York), Wendall Oaks (Colorado), Curtis Sharp (North Carolina), and Wendell Hassell (Colorado).

Curtis Sharp (Senior Conservationist 94 years strong, second from right) had previously contacted **Mimi Williams** at the Brooksville PMC, who sent Victor to join us at least as an informal or ad hoc IDP item to tap into the years of experience with SCS/NRCS. Victor is a recent PhD graduate from the University of Florida in agroecology.



Subsidence in the Everglades Agricultural Area



Save the date for the 79th SWCS International Annual Conference, July 21–24, 2024 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina! This year's conference theme is "Rising Together: Collaborative Conservation for All."

Call for presentation submissions and more details regarding the event will be posted in the coming months at www.swcs.org/24AC.

More information will be forthcoming in an upcoming issue of the ARCSE Newsletter regarding details for our Annual ARCSE meeting. Please visit our website to learn more about ARCSE: <https://arcse.org>.

SWCS Intern for ARCSE: Courtney Allen is working as web manager for the ARCSE.



Courtney Allen
courtneymarie.allen@yahoo.com

ACES Program

Julie MacSwain, ARCSE President

Through the Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Program, experienced workers, age 55 and over, help NRCS employees provide technical services in support of conservation.

NEW Solutions is proud to connect professionals, age 55+, with part-time and full-time opportunities throughout the country. These are non-federal, grant-administered positions and are not meant to compete with private sector wages. Duties range from clerical

and administrative to technical and scientific. To learn more on how to apply, [please click here](#) or go to:

<https://newsolutions.org/jobs/?program=ace>

Phone: (703) 558-4200

Email: hq@newsolutions.org. Website: www.newsolutions.org

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Paul Benedict, Membership Chair

New Life Members

Byron Kirwin – Seymour, Illinois

Peter D. Lindgren – Rhinelander, Wisconsin

Janice Reid – Palm Coast, Florida

Michael J. Mitchell - Bowling Green, Kentucky

New Members

Dora Guffey – Carlisle, Iowa

Steve Scheinost – Lincoln, Nebraska

Alan Lauver – Indianola, Iowa

Douglas C. Seibel – Fort Worth, Texas

I would like to thank all the ARCSE members who have paid their 2024 dues and hard copy fees. Please remember, if you are not a Life Member or an Honorary Member (Member who turned 91 by 12/31/23 with 5 years of paid membership), you must pay your \$25 2024 dues by April 15th, 2024. Otherwise, you will no longer be considered an active ARCSE member, and you will not receive the May/June ARCSE Newsletter and 2024 ARCSE Directory. If you do not pay your newsletter \$15 hard copy fee by April 15th, you will no longer receive the newsletter by mail. If I have an email address on file for you, we will email it to you. If you have questions about your membership status, please contact me. ARCSE annual dues and hard copy fees can be paid by credit card: <https://arcsecommunications.wordpress.com/renew/>. Or you can pay by check. Mail checks made out to "ARCSE" to: ARCSE, PO Box 8965, Moscow, ID 83843. The 2023 ARCSE Directory will be coming out with the May/June Newsletter.

–NEW RATES–

ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES

Due by January 1st

Member \$25 per year (1st year free)

Affiliate \$25 per year

Life (One-time payment)

Age 64 or younger \$325

Age 65 thru 74 \$275

Age 75 or older \$175

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 \$15.00 per year.

Please submit Dues to ARCSE at P.O. Box 8965 Moscow, ID 83843

2024 ARCSE Directory

Now is your last chance to update your contact information for the 2024 ARCSE Directory. If you need to change street address, email address, phone number, add a spouse name, etc., please let me know by April 15th, 2024, by emailing me at soilwarden@verizon.net, or call me at 202-578-8226.

ALABAMA

Earl Norton, ARCSE Representative

Email: earl.norton@charter.net

Retirees who worked in the Tuscaloosa area met recently for lunch and fellowship.



Pictured left to right: Terry Williamson, district conservationist (Carrollton); Don Presley, area conservationist; David McGraw and Linda, area administrative coordinator; Milton Tuck, resource soil scientist; Steve Rohrer, resource conservationist; Donna Lake, Tuscaloosa SWCD administrative coordinator; and Larry McCray, resource engineer.

2024 ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES and HARD COPY NEWSLETTER FEES were due Jan. 1st, 2024.



Retirees in the Auburn area continue to meet for breakfast and fellowship on the first Monday of each month at Chappy's Deli. Pictured at the February meeting (L-R): Ken Rogers, Charles Bush, Earl Norton, Ernest Todd and Mac Nelson

Retirees were saddened by the passing of **Erlene Moore Lingle** on January 2nd, 2024 at the age of 96. Erlene was the widow of **William "Bill" Lingle**, retired AL State Conservationist (late 1960s – 1981). Erlene remained a very active and loved member of the Auburn community for the 37 years after Bill had passed.

ARIZONA

Ken Cookson, ARCSE Representative

Email: ckcookson@aol.com



Steve Black and relatives at 200th anniversary celebration

Steve Black Report. Last September Steve Black hosted a Bicentennial open house celebration at our farm in Illinois, since the farmhouse on the site was 200 years old. The house was built by my widowed great, great Grandmother in 1823 after she arrived there from England with her five children. Forty-six of her descendants from six or seven states attended the event, and many of these 2nd, 3rd, and 4th cousins had not met before this event; some represented the 8th generation. Many of the attendees had never been to the house and just became aware of it in the last few years. The farm is an Illinois Bicentennial Farm, and it is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places, given its age and significance to early settlement, agriculture, and architecture. It was a wonderful day for all who were able to attend and meet distant relatives for the first time.

CALIFORNIA

Bill Ward, ARCSE Representative

Email: bluegrassbillward@gmail.com

Greetings to Retirees across the Nation from California!

California retirees continue to enjoy our monthly Zoom meetings. We had a very small group, only three of us took part in our January 3rd meeting to kick off the New Year. Our California retirees sure miss **Harold Honeyfield** who never missed an opportunity to join one of our monthly Zoom sessions.

Bill and Dana Ward's trip to Italy!

In my last report for the Newsletter I promised some pictures would be shared from our amazing 14-day trip to Italy. If you are looking for an overseas trip to Europe, I would highly recommend you consider Italy. So much history, and beauty to see, a photographer's paradise and experience. The following YouTube video is only part 1 of our travels through Rome and Italy. <https://youtu.be/s5mlVKwayRw>.

Bill and Dana enjoyed an amazing two- week travel adventure in Italy. We have so many terrific pictures taken from our time in Florence, Venice, and Milan. I am going to spread out sharing them. Here are some of our favorites taken in Florence.

I will share more next time of our favorites from Venice and Milan.



Well that is about all from California this time folks. Until next time, best Wishes to all!

—Bill Ward, CA ARCSE State Rep., ARCSE West Region VP

COLORADO

Jack Carlson, ARCSE Representative

Email: pspicata@gmail.com

Retirees **Phil Smith, Dave Butler, Stu Keil, and Frank Geter** convened early January for monthly Breakfast Club. Those convening first Tuesday February were **Phil Smith, Ken Harward, Terry Buettgenbach, Stu Keil, Chuck Hart, Frank Geter, Dave Butler, Wendall Oaks, Tim Carney, and Jack Carlson.**

In late January Coloradoans **Wendell Hassell**, **Wendall Oaks**, **Jack Carlson**, with **Larry Holzworth** (Montana), and **Fred Gaffney** (New York) traveled to south Florida and joined Senior Conservationist **Curtis Sharp** for six days of botanizing and related activity, the group's 13th Love of Grass trek, the first since 2019. This group of former NRCS plant materials specialists and agronomists inventoried Florida Scrub, Wet Flatwoods, and other communities in Jonathan Dickson State Park (Martin County), coastal dune vegetation at Stuart Beach on Hutchinson Island, and looped through the Everglades Agricultural Area, along the Ridge and citrus groves, around Lake Okeechobee back to Jupiter. They were pleased to be joined by **Victor Guerra**, NRCS study leader at the Brooksville Plant Materials Center, a recent Ph.D. graduate from the University of Florida in agroecology. Prior Love of Grass treks also have featured visits with NRCS plant materials staff and the opportunity to interact with the current and new generations carrying on this work.



Hunting carnivorous bladderwort and sundews

CONNECTICUT, RHODE ISLAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Carl DuPolt, ARCSE Representative

Email: cdupoldt@gmail.com

CT

2024 Connecticut Land Conservation Conference:

<https://ctconservation.org/event/2024-conference/>

Fishing and Outdoor Show:

<https://ctfishingoutdoorshow.com/>

Craft Beer Fest:

<https://www.connecticut.beer/ctbeerfest2024#:~:text=CT%20BEER%20FEST%202024,-CT%20Craft%20Beer&text=JOIN%20US%20APRIL%2020th%2C%202024,special%20beers%20throughout%20the%20day>

NH

Discover WILD New Hampshire Day Set for Saturday, April 20, 2024:

<https://nhfishgame.com/2024/01/30/discover-wild-new-hampshire-day-set-for-saturday-april-20-2024/>

Maple Sugaring at Charmingfare Farm:

<https://www.visitthefarm.com/maple-sugaring/>

RI

Land & Water Conservation Summit:

<https://rilandtrusts.org/event/2024-ri-land-water-conservation-summit/>

74th Annual RI Home Show:

<https://www.goprovidence.com/event/74th-annual-ri-home-show/42919/>

Carl DuPolt sent this: The results are in from the 2024 World Snow Sculpting Championship. The event, which runs from Jan. 17–21 in Stillwater, British Columbia, sees teams from around the world compete for prize money and the title of World Champion. These are just some of the sculptures.



FLORIDA

Bill Kuenstler, ARCSE Representative

Email: bkuenstler@gmail.com

Bob Halstead submitted the following: "I was going through some old files and found these photos. The two from the State Conservationists' meeting in Minnesota have picture captions that are readable. For the picture of the STCs' wives I recognize several of the wives: the blonde, third one in the second row, is my wife, **Sue**. I love those 70s hairdos."



Caption recovered from back of photo with help from Jack Carlson. State Conservationists' Annual Meeting, Harry S. Truman Library, Kansas City, Missouri, September 13th, 1970 (might also be 1976).

Photographer: John E. Fichter

(L-R) Row 1. Hank Spears, Sigrid Bartelli, Maurine Huey, Judy Bivens, Ruth Harrison, Marty Martin, Ligia Quintero, Ruth Strong, Ruth Brune, and Lorraine Thola.

(L-R) Row 2. Mary Finoher, Rita Fitzgerald, Sue Halstead, Reg Hilliard, Jo Right, Jenina Addison, Judy Martin, and Ellen Nut.

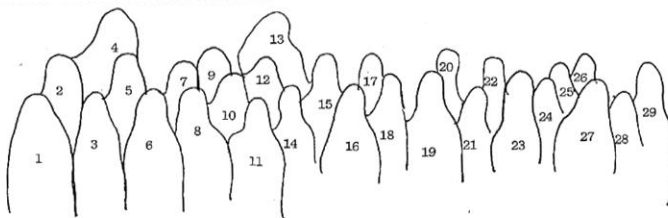
(L-R) Row 3. Nava Barry, Helen Burdick, Mary Thomas, Lois McManus, Pat Gray, Kathryn Newcombe, Anna Austin, Jean Cratty, and Betty Howard.

(L-R) Row 4. Joan McMillan, Emma Treadway, Betty Holmes, Bernice Haderlie, Sue Shiflet, Dorothy Narke, Margaret Murray, and Carrie Sullivan.

(L-R) Row 5. Eleanor Grimwood and Del Rockenbaugh.

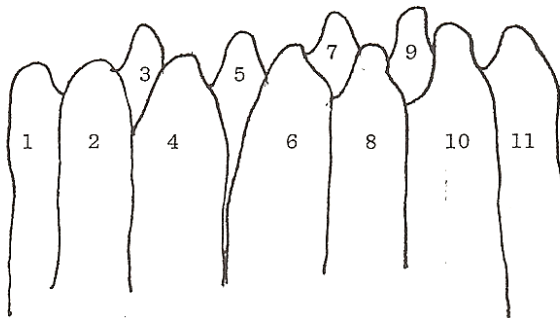
(L-R) Row 6. Marie Gillmon, Dorothy Burbank, Marilyn Davie, and June Willie.





Midwest State Conservationists Meeting
Brainerd, Minnesota
June 7-9, 1982

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Dean Stratton | 16. Mrs. Harry Major (Lucille) |
| 2. John "Dub" Tippie | 17. Clayton Graham |
| 3. Mrs. Dean Stratton (Nina) | 18. Mrs. Clayton Graham (Ernie) |
| 4. John Eckes | 19. Paul Howard |
| 5. Paul Larson | 20. Robert Eddleman |
| 6. Mrs. John Tippie (Dee) | 21. Mrs. William Brune (Ruth) |
| 7. Homer Hilner | 22. Robert Halstead |
| 8. Mrs. Paul Larson (Patricia) | 23. William Brune |
| 9. Harry Major | 24. Mrs. Cliff Maguire (Connie) |
| 10. Mrs. Homer Hilner (Wanda) | 25. Cliff Maguire |
| 11. Mrs. Benny Martin (Marty) | 26. Robert Wilson |
| 12. Daniel Pope | 27. Donald Ferren |
| 13. Benny Martin | 28. Mrs. Wes Oneth (Elayne) |
| 14. Mrs. Gene Pope (Muriel) | 29. Wes Oneth |
| 15. Gene Pope | |



Midwest State Conservationists Meeting
Brainerd, Minnesota
June 7-9, 1982

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Nina Stratton | 7. Lucille Major |
| 2. Dee Tippie | 8. Ruth Brune |
| 3. Wanda Hilner | 9. Ernie Graham |
| 4. Marty Martin | 10. Connie Maguire |
| 5. Muriel Pope | 11. Elayne Oneth |
| 6. Patricia Larson | |

IOWA**Mark Jensen, ARCSE Representative****Email: amjens1@gmail.com**

Thanks to **Jim McIntosh** for the following letter/update to our retirees:

"Hello to all of the SCS/NRCS retirees. I am thankful that ARCSE is in place and active.

Since I retired in Jan. 2013, I went back to ministry school. In short, after graduating from that, I soon took a church in Cromwell, Iowa. I was there for about 3 to 4 years. Then I took another position where I rotate between 5 churches with another pastor. I keep quite busy with church activities. We are soon beginning the season of Lent, and the Union County Ministerial Alliance will be holding Lenten services every Sun. evening at various locations around the county. At each ecumenical service a pastor from another church comes in to speak at one of the churches with a light meal following. I am scheduled to speak at the Holy Spirit Catholic Church at noon in Creston on Good Friday. One of the churches that I pastor at is having their annual 'Music Festival.' I also play the harmonica and have been asked to play it during that music festival. Then it will be time for the Baccalaureate. Well, I also have Parkinson's Disease, and my wife and I have been praying about this. We do go to the Creston Family Fitness Center 4 times a week, for "Delay the Disease" class and "Rock Steady Boxing" class. This is to help with mobility and to assist in delaying the Parkinson's Disease. But we have decided that we would like to take a cruise to celebrate our 30-year anniversary, and possibly some other activities. Therefore, I have put in to retire from the ministry this coming June 30, 2024.

When I have time, I also help a friend who operates a large farm. This is also great exercise for me, and I enjoy it.

For the past 2 years, my wife's nephew's daughter has been living with us. She is going to school at the 'School for the Deaf,' in Council Bluffs, Iowa. She comes home every Fri. afternoon about 3:15pm and leaves to go back on Sun. evenings around 5:15pm or so. This has been a challenge to have a teenage girl living with us at our age. By the way, I am 68½ years of age.

We live in the country on the east side of Twelve Mile Lake and own an acreage. I keep busy mowing our three acres in the summer, and we enjoy the wildlife, pets, and gardening and all of the things that our God has provided for us to enjoy and care for. We have a fairly long windbreak of Colorado Blue Spruce trees northwest of our house, and ornamental trees on both sides of our driveway south of our house. I plan on framing up the inside of one my metal buildings this summer. If I get that done, I plan on wiring it, and then insulation and fiber board over the outside of that.

We are very happy to have the opportunity to live where we are living, so until our health takes a turn, we will likely stay where we are at.

I do enjoy fishing with a friend. I don't like to go by myself though. We also enjoy watching and following the Iowa Cubs games. We often go to Des Moines throughout the summer to watch some of the games.

I just want to mention that I do miss seeing and getting to visit with many of the NRCS active and inactive employees. But we did go to the ARCSE Christmas meeting that was held this past November. We enjoyed seeing and visiting with all that were present!

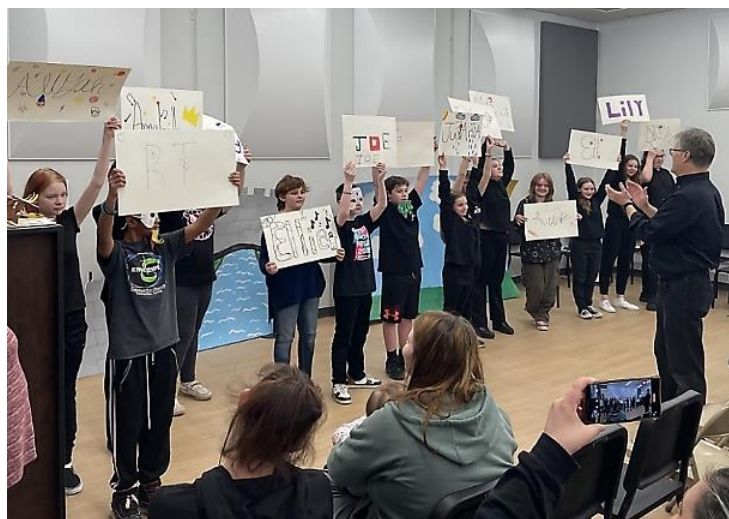
It is my prayer that each and every one of you are blessed with good health, peace, happiness, love and are enjoying your retirement.

—Blessings to all, **Jim and Ronda McIntosh**"



Jim McIntosh

For many years, **Marty Adkins** and his wife **Carol** have been very active with the Knoxville Area Community Theater. Here is an update from Marty about their current theater-related activities: "Our theatre camp for middle schoolers wraps up this afternoon. I've been part of a small team that worked with a group of 16 sixth and seventh graders after school several days a week since mid-January. We worked on basic acting and stage skills through a series of exercises and games. The kids showcased those skills through five short plays and sketches that they performed for family and friends this week (photo attached). Working with middle schoolers can be challenging but is really rewarding!



Marty Adkins instructing Middle Schoolers at Theater Camp

In March and April I'll be directing a community theatre production of *Blithe Spirit* along with a short radio-style show. It's a classic comedy and should be a lot of fun. Performances will be April 19–21 at the Knoxville Performing Arts Center. Carol is in the cast and production team, so it's another family project for us, which is great."

During late January and early February, **Ann** and I (**Mark Jensen**) took a little trip out east to Detroit and Cleveland. We met up with daughter **Christy** and **Chris** in Detroit. Chris is the women's basketball coach at Cleveland State University. We went to CSU games against Detroit Mercy University and Oakland University. In between games we did some sightseeing. One of our favorite spots was the Aquarium at Belle Isle Park. From Detroit, we went on to Cleveland. In addition to attending a couple more CSU basketball games, we went to the Lake Erie Science and Nature Center; Headland Beach on the east side of Cleveland; did some hiking at Hinkley Reservation (part of the Cleveland MetroParks system); and enjoyed an evening with Christy and Chris at the Michael Angelo Winery.

I don't think I've ever included something in this newsletter that wasn't about a retired SCS/NRCSer. However, here's a bit of information about a person that some of you may have known who was not one of "our retirees." **Bill Northey** was an Iowan who was very active in many agricultural groups. He served as Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture for several years. When USDA was reorganized as directed by the 2014 Farm Bill, Northey was named as the Under-Secretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). FPAC encompasses NRCS, the Farm Service Agency, and the Risk Management Agency. Bill Northey passed away on February 5th.

Since the last newsletter, we have welcomed the following three folks into our retirement community: **Dennis Eppling**, Soil Conservation Technician in the Sergeant Bluff Field Office; **Shelley Dugan**, Program Specialist in the State Office; and **Lisa Hobbs**, Administrative Support Assistant in the State Office.

During that same time period we have been saddened by the passing of the following: **Doug Oelmann**, retired Assistant State Soil Scientist passed away on December 15; **Jerri Peterson**, wife of the late **Lyle Peterson**, passed away on January 18; and **Rick Bednarek**, retired State Soil Scientist, passed away on January 25th.

MAINE

John Simon, ARCSE Representative

Email: jjhorseshoe39@icloud.com

January 2024 breakfast: **Bruce Champeon** was recovering from a bad cold and stayed home to not expose his friends to the virus. He caught it from grandkids in NH over the holidays. Sounds familiar for sure. Thank you, Bruce for your thoughtfulness! **Caren Roy** also had a cold and decided to stay home. She will see us next month.

Tom Smith took the trouble to drive all the way up from Portland! Wow. We love you, Tom! Great seeing you. Tom and I worked out of the Lewiston office for years!

I heard from **Ed Snow** last fall, and he indicated he plans on attending at least one of our breakfasts this coming summer. I pray that he is successful! The picnic would probably be a real good fit for Ed. **Joe B.** may even attend the picnic. Joe struggles with mobility so at the picnic he would need to have lots of help getting around.

An advance reminder to all that we plan on a 2nd Tuesday picnic at the Cascade Park in Bangor on June 11th starting at noon. It gives all of us plenty of time to circulate and visit each other much more than at the breakfasts. This is in place of our Tuesday breakfast.



Attendees for the 2024 January breakfast were: Bob, Lagassey, John Simon, Dave Mussulman, Lydia Mussulman, Susan Arrants, Dan Baumert, Tom Smith, and Art Taylor.

We had a new member in attendance in **Susan Arrants**. Welcome aboard Susan! **Bob Lagassey** passed the copy of **Norm Kalloch's** book [A Long Way to Walk](#) to Susan who will bring it for the next reader next month.

Buster Carter (of Ellsworth, ME) who will be a new breakfast attendee was not at Tuesday's breakfast, but he wanted to join ARCSE. The first year is free for new retirees.

Patty Wright broke her ankle and will be unable to attend until the ankle heals. Patty is in our thoughts and prayers!

Many thanks go to **Mary Thompson** who corralled these new members at a recent retiree party!

Because my ISP limits me to fifty names of which I am at the limit. I will add the three new members to a group and forward all emails to them. If anyone wants their emails, I can include them in one of my updates.

2024 January Dysarts Breakfast attendees Tuesday 1-9-2024: **Bob Lagassey, John Simon, Dave Mussulman, Lydia Mussulman, Susan Arrants, Dan Baumert, Tom Smith, and Art Taylor.**

February 2024 breakfast: Maine had 13 lively retirees on hand in February. The photo below shows who attended. We had **Caron Roy** in attendance for the first time and **Susan Arrants** for the second time! Welcome to you both. I was informed that **Buster Carter** (newly retired) lives in Ellsworth. **Dana Nelson** also lives in Ellsworth, I believe. Maybe Dana and Buster can carpool up to have breakfast with us or attend the picnic in June. A reminder for those far away that the June picnic on Tuesday June 11th will be at Cascade Park in Bangor starting at noon, so if interested, put it on your calendar. **Joe B.** will make an effort to attend with **Ellie**.

Norm Kalloch was in attendance, his annual attendance. It was great seeing him. Believe it or not he is working on another book! He will be at his camp in a few months to enjoy the summer on the shore of West Carry Pond. It is a nice spot for sure.

I need to apologize to **Art Taylor** as I got only half of his face on the group photo. Sorry Art.

We had **Dan McAllister** (FmHA) in attendance. Dan has operated a vegetable farm in Hampden for years. Dan is in his 80s, so he is rethinking his operation. If he stops, **Noreen** and I will miss his vegetables big time! We all did some milling around after the breakfast before leaving. At 13 attendees we all did not get to talk to everyone! If you look at the photo you will notice everyone has a smile – something to do with retirement!

If my memory is correct, this is one of the few times we had 13 in attendance. It was pleasant that the Dysarts Restaurant crew made the effort to seat us all together!



2024 February Dysarts Breakfast attendees. 2-13-2024: Dan McAllister, Brian Stuart, Chris Jones, Susan Arrants, Bruce Champeon, Norm Kalloch, Karen Champeon, Lydia Mussulman, Dave Mussulman, Caron Roy, Bob Lagassey, and Art Taylor. Photo by John Simon.

The days are getting longer, so spirits are rising. Golf courses will be opening in several months, so **Dave M.** will start getting his fresh air and sunshine for sure! Noreen and I love watching golf on Saturday TV and watching the agony of the golfers when their putts miss the hole by inches! We also see some long putts, which I really enjoy watching!

Take care and God bless, John Simon, Rep. for ARCSE for Maine.

MIDATLANTIC STATES

Terry D'Addio, ARCSE Representative

Email: tmdaddio@aol.com

Some of the MidAtlantic ARCSE Members had breakfast in Woodbridge, VA, on Feb. 6th. They meet at the Bob Evans Restaurant on Smoketown Road on the first Tuesday of each month.



L–R: Ron Marlow, John Peterson, Bill Irwin, Jerry Bernard, John Moore, and Ron Page.

From John Peterson:

Plane crashes into the Potomac River, Washington, DC (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2022/01/13/air-florida-crash-40-years/>)

On January 13, 1982, an Air Florida Boeing 737-222 plunged into the Potomac River in Washington, D.C., killing 78 people. The crash, caused by bad weather, took place only two miles from the White House.

"I was on the bridge that day and saw the plane crash into the span next to us. Almost immediately Park Police helicopters were there. We had left the USDA South Ag. Building at 2:30pm because of the storm. The bridge was only two blocks or so from the office. The crash happened close to 4pm. That tells you how slow we were moving. My carpool members (**Bill Dooley, Arun Basu, Swayne Scott**, and me) debated jumping out and trying to help, but so many others had done that, and most were in the way and not helping. We decided to keep driving. We got across the bridge, but only four more cars behind us did. The police closed the bridge, and the cars on it were stuck there. We finally got home about 11pm, and the only reason we made it is that our driver had a 4-wheel drive GMC. We went around many cars stuck in the snow. We did not have cell phones then so could not call home and let them know where we were. Many of my friends left their cars on the streets and went to hotels or back to their offices to spend the night. I am the only one of those carpool members still living today. – A day I will never forget."

Arnold King wrote: "That was an amazing day. Me, **Horace Austin, Gary Nordstrom's, Wayne Chapman** – my carpool – were right behind you. We didn't witness the wreck, but I walked up to the crest and saw what you described. Will never forget that day."

From John Peterson at the Texans'/Ravens' game:

"We were there with 71,018 other freezing fans. Great 34–10 win. When I had my mini stroke some years ago, and started taking a blood thinner, they told me I would be more susceptible to the cold. And I really was. For an old Minnesotan, I froze to death even with many layers of clothes on."



Erin and John about an hour before game time.

Rich Duesterhaus sent sad news that "**Jude Mollenhauer** joined the other angels in heaven. She was prepared as well as anyone could be for this transition." See the In Memoriam section for more details.

MISSOURI

Dave Rastorfer, ARCSE Representative

Email: daverastorfer@aol.com, moarscse@aol.com

The Columbia area retirees met for breakfast on 2/14/2024. Those in attendance included **Jerry Edwards, Gena Michalson, Odie Swanegan, Dennis Hoffman, Jean Herman, Frank Gordon, Gail Sallee and Dave Rastorfer**. The next quarterly breakfast will be on May 8th at JJ's café in Columbia. Everyone is invited to attend.

Paula Price: Life is going pretty smooth for me. I am still working four days a week, volunteering in the Mosaic gift shop one morning a week and enjoying family and friends. This is my 5th year on the Mosaic Auxiliary board and keeping busy with hospitality at church. The granddaughters are 15 (**Jordin**) and 9 (**Holly** and **Rylee**). Jordin is a busy girl with school and club volleyball. This weekend I am with the twins while **Andrew** and **Cindy** are with Jordin in Omaha playing in a tournament. I look forward to seeing her play in March at Bartle Hall in K.C. The Twins are in UPWARD Youth Sports at the First Baptist Church in Kearney. That's where we will be today. Speaking of KC, how about those Chiefs? I have lots of fond memories of my days with USDA-NRCS in Area 1. I hope each of you do, too.

Jim Rickman: Leaving Monday for Africa, but will try and contribute. Hope all is well with you. Since we are the same age, I expect like myself you continually get news of your fellow classmates, in the form of obituaries.

Dan Philbrick: On June 27th, 1967, I reported to the SCS office in Shelbyville, MO. And on November 16th, 2023, I finally and completely retired, having spent 38+ years with SCS/NRCS, a couple of years out in the Army, a bit of volunteer time, and the rest ACES. Thoroughly enjoyed (mostly) the time and felt honored to be able to contribute and better other people's lives. The best part was the privilege of working with a great group of fellow employees. I've been blessed.

MONTANA

Lori Valadez, ARCSE Representative

Email: valadez226@gmail.com

Gooby Ranch Report: Mary Ann decided we needed a house cat because we were inundated with mice, rats, moles, and ground squirrels. We went to the Beaverhead Animal Shelter and looked over all their cats. Mary Ann wanted a cat that would stay in the house, kill rodents, and still be my lap cat when it wasn't harvesting varmints.

We looked at a bunch of cats and finally picked one that was a female, light tan and seemed to like me. We decided to take her home and named her **Amber**. When we got home Mary Ann showed the cat around the house and where she put the cat food.

It's been two weeks since we got Amber, and she still hasn't eaten any of the cat food. It's obvious she prefers locally grown food. Mary Ann is really proud of Amber for focusing on the rodents.

Amber is doing a really good job. Since we live in a cabin with a dirt floor, Mary Ann only had to rake the mole hills flat three times this week. Before we got Amber, she had to rake the floor five times a week.

I'm supposed to walk 10,000 steps a day. Whenever I stand up to go for a walk, Amber jumps in front of me and demands pets. If I don't stop, she rubs on my ankles until she trips me. By the time I stop, bend down, pick her up, pet her, and put her down it takes at least 10 seconds.

With Amber in front of me I have an excuse for not walking 10,000 steps. I was worried but I checked with my pal Ernie down at the bar, and he said that every time I bend down, pick up the cat and pet her, it should count as 100 steps. Now I'm getting way more steps a day than I'm required to get.

NEBRASKA

Norm Kempf, Jim Culver, ARCSE Representatives

Emails: nkempf@neb.rr.com, j4culver@aol.com

The January 17th meeting was called to order by **Craig Derickson**. Attending were **Gus Dornbusch, Dave Camper, Gary Muckel, Craig Derickson, Steve Stover, Steve Scheinost, Norm Helzer, Bob Engel, Doug Christensen, Dana Snyder, and Donna Dornbusch**.



There was an excellent turnout for our 3rd Wednesday of the month breakfast at Greenfield's Restaurant for our February meeting.

The February 21st meeting was called to order by Chairperson **Craig Derickson**. Attending were **Harold Klaege, Richard Bolli, Gus Dornbusch, Thomas Reinsch, Craig Derickson, Jim Culver, Norman Kempf, Doug Christensen, Bob Engel, Scott Willet, Steve Scheinost, JoAnne Thiele, Donna Dornbusch, Steve Stover, Norm Helzer, and Dave Camper**.

The proposed Nebraska legislative bill LB863 introduced by **Senator Linehan** in the Nebraska Legislature was discussed, that would revise Statute 77-2716 and eliminate FERS retirees from reducing their Federal adjusted gross income for annuities received under the Federal Employees Retirement Systems. Federal employees who retired under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) would still be eligible for reductions under their Federal adjusted gross income by the amounts received as annuities under the Civil Service Retirement System. Craig encouraged FERS annuitants to contact their State Senator and ask them to oppose this change. He stated that his opinion is that annuity payments received by FERS and CSRS retirees should be treated equally and asked his State senator to oppose this change.

The current officers agreed to serve another year. The officers for 2024 are **Craig Derickson**, Chairperson; **Doug Christensen**, Vice-Chairperson; **Steve Scheinost**, Treasurer; and **Donna Dornbusch**, Secretary and Attendance recorder.

Craig stated that Nebraska state agencies such as the Department of Energy and Environment and the Department of Agriculture are working with groups and individuals on grant proposals to submit to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for funds to work with agricultural producers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate impacts of climate change. The Nebraska Soil Health Coalition is trying to get information introduced that would promote soil health management systems as a good way to sequester carbon and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Harold Klaege of the NARFE Nebraska Chapter said that he and others visited with Nebraska Senator Linehan about Nebraska legislative bill LB863. However, the bill did not reach the top 60 for review by the state senators this year. Also discussed was a bill introduced by **Senator Linehan** that would raise state sales taxes by 1%.

Craig announced that the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) are working to help local governments develop policies and programs that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address other environmental hazards.

Howard McNiff, a retired engineer with the agency, passed away January 30th, 2024; funeral services are pending. He lived in Cook, Nebraska.

Doug Christensen and his wife enjoyed their month-long cruise that started in Rome, Italy, and then traveled to several countries and islands; i.e., Turkey and the island of Crete.



Doug and Cindy Christensen on a month-long Mediterranean holiday from Turkey to Morocco and across Atlantic to Ft. Lauderdale.

As the Nebraska State Office is moving and **Doug**, who works part time in cleaning out old files, came across this **Chester Arthur** booklet. It seemed appropriate to present it to Gus on this special morning. We all owe President Chester Author a bit as he in 1883 signed into law the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act.



Doug Christensen, our Vice-Chairperson presenting Gus Dornbusch, past Director of the Midwest Regional Technical Service Center, the Chester Arthur official coffee record booklet.

Doug Christensen presented **Gus Dornbusch** with a notebook and a picture of **Chester A. Arthur** from the Chester A. Arthur room at the former Midwest National Technical Center (MNTC). Doug noted that Gus had encouraged innovation and new ideas to meet conservation challenges while he was the Director of the MNTC, and ideas were often discussed in the Chester A. Arthur room.

Tom Reinsch and his wife recently traveled to Hawaii and had a wonderful time.

Scott Willet attended **Brad Soncksen's** retirement party. He asked if the state office sent out notices of these type of events to retirement groups. This has not happened lately because of changes in the office structure of the state office.

Jim Culver announced that the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) will have its national meeting July 21–27 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. An ARCSE session is also planned at the meeting.

Jim Culver encouraged members to increase their giving to the Nebraska SWCS foundation for scholarships.

Minutes recorded by Donna Dornbusch, Secretary.

A venture and effort of retaining historical club records and current overview of Lincoln NRCS Retirees Club by: **Jim Culver, Norm Helzer and Norman Kempf.**

The Lincoln SCS Retirees Club was organized in 1971. Through the years this has been a very active organization. Monthly meetings, spring banquets, and fall breakfasts were regularly scheduled and held. Excellent records were kept of meetings, attendance, planning for banquets and fall breakfasts and accurate detailed tracking records for any money spent – regardless of how large or how small it was.



The Lincoln SCS Retirees Club had annual picnics and group meetings – commonly in the early fall when the weather was traditionally excellent. This group picture of about 47 Retirees Club members and spouses in 1975 met at the popular Lincoln Antelope Park.

The detailed records are in part a carryover from all members who were former employees of the USDA-SCS. The SCS was known for being very detailed in keeping track of monies, regardless of the amount and was very strong in detailed planning and carrying out the objectives and mission of the agency. Someone in Congress once commented that if the SCS needed some additional funds that it was probably needed and would be good use of government monies. The SCS had a reputation of being very conservative in spending federal monies only on projects that were really needed and benefited the conservation of our natural resources.

So these same retired members of our club were used to keeping detailed records. Over the years these records accumulated. No one was brave enough to declare the records surplus or throw them away.

In about 2019 **Jim Culver**, our Chairperson along with some suggestions from **Norman Kempf** took home all of the records, mostly from **Donna Dornbusch** who has been our excellent Sectary for a good number of years. **Gary Muckle** later provided several documents from the Ladies Auxiliary. An effort was made to sort out the large number of documents and arrange them in some fashion so they could be scanned and put on a CD or other electronic device to preserve a bit of the Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club history.

The total weight of notebooks and documents to be evaluated for scanning was about 36 pounds. The most significant information that would reflect the recorded activities of the Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club was scanned. Often the same information was included in several different documents.

The documents were sorted by general subject matter and scanned. Below is a listing of the different topics that were scanned. The scanning was completed about January of 2023 and loaded on CD and Thumb Drive for viewing by others.

- 2 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club By-Laws
- 3 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club – Minutes of meetings 2022 – 1971
- 4 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club Historical Attendance – at meetings over the years
- 5 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club Directories -- by years
- 6 – Nebraska – USDA – SCS – 1960 Personnel Directory
- 7 – Retirement dates and locations for Nebraska State and MNTC Retirees
- 8 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club - Historical Documents
- 9 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club - Annual Banquets and Breakfasts
- 10 – Nebraska SCS-NRCS Retirees Banquet Brochures – 2013-1976
- 11 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club Photos old – cook outs and selected events
- 12 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club – Old Volunteer Projects
- 13 – Lincoln SCS-NRCS Retirees Club - Obituaries – Includes only Club members and other significant SCS people that were put in the special (OBIT'S) book.

Preservation of our Club Historical Records –

Contact has been made with staff at the Nebraska Historical Museum, and initial plans are underway with the Nebraska Historical Museum to archive our scanned Historical records. They will then be available to other interested people. So hopefully this will be a successful venture with the Nebraska Historical Museum.

Current Overview of Lincoln NRCS Retirees Club

The Lincoln NRCS Retirees Club, formally "Lincoln SCS Retirees Club," celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2021. The first meeting to organize the club was April 21st, 1971 at Scott Pancake House in Piedmont. **Art Marquardt**, retired Asst. State Conservationist for Nebraska, was the lead person in getting the organized started. He thought it would be very desirable to have a monthly breakfast of retired SCS employees who reside in the Lincoln area in order to maintain some association and social contact. Eleven retired SCS employees were at this first organization meeting. There were 33 charter members of the club.

The Lincoln Club was the first one organized in the United States, although many states now have one. One interesting note is that the Club had met monthly on the 3rd Wednesday morning of each month. That tradition had held steadfast over the fifty years until COVID-19 came. In 2020 we had contact meetings in January and February. We had no meeting of any kind for the remainder of the year. Beginning in 2021 we started having Zoom meetings and in June of this year resumed normal person-to-person meetings. Today we still meet on the morning of the third Wednesday of each month.

The club has met at several locations around Lincoln over the years. We currently meet at Greenfield's Café in southeast Lincoln. We have club officers and a calling committee to remind our members of the upcoming meeting. We start off with a relaxed fun business meeting. Meeting agenda includes items such as: Welcome to members, guest or new members, Health Reports, Travel Experience, Special Activities, Old Business, and New Business. Minutes of the monthly meeting are provided to members. Currently there are 30 active members in the Lincoln area and four members who reside outside the Lincoln area. **Craig Derickson** is the current Chairperson; Doug Christenson, Vice-Chairperson; Steve Scheinost, Treasurer; and Donna Dornbusch, Secretary.

The Lincoln SCS/NRCS Retirees club is still very active. So if you are in the general area on the third Wednesday of the month please stop by and join us at the Greenfield's Cafe at 8am. The business meeting is generally short and there is ample time for discussion of a wide variety of topics ranging from what the grandkids are doing, the weather, and even occasionally the Nebraska Football team concerns. However, **Norm Helzer** is quick to remind us that our Nebraska Volleyball Team is "A OK"!

NEW JERSEY

Nancy Paolini, ARCSE Representative

Email: npaolini@comcast.net



In December 2023 retirees were invited to attend the NJ NRCS Holiday Party and tour the new State Office. Pictured are Linda Peterson, Engineer; Tim Dunne, SRC; Nancy Paolini, RC; Tom Drewes, State Conservationist; and Rich Shaw, State Soil Scientist.



Group photo of some NJ retirees along with the active staff who attended the annual Holiday Party

NORTH CAROLINA

James Canterbury, ARCSE Representative

Email: jhcanter@bellsouth.net

Eight retirees from the Raleigh area met at the Farmers Market Restaurant for breakfast on January 17th. We welcomed **Duncan McGregor** who has recently moved to North Carolina from Virginia. Attending the breakfast were **Jim Canterbury, John Kelly, Duncan McGregor, Roger Montague, Cecil Settle, Horace Smith, Mike Sugg** and **Phil Tant**.



OREGON

Don Stettler, ARCSE Representative

Email: don.stettler@comcast.net

The Oregon retirees met for the winter quarter lunch at Elmer's restaurant on NE 181st Avenue on January 31st. An earlier date scheduled for the lunch was postponed because of a winter storm that brought snow and wind to the region resulting in power outages, downed trees, and several deaths.

Attending were **Frank Reckendorf, Ralph Wadleigh, Russ Hatz, Bette Holscher, Jim Marron, Jo Huelshoff, Louise Davis, Joe Sahlfeld, Eldena VanderZanden, Beth Zetter and Butch, Dick and Kathy Sylvester, Terry Mitchell, Pat Straka, Gale Voge, Bobbie Hart, Thor Thorson, Kay Denfeld, Leland Saele, Lowell Kenedy**, and yours truly, **Don Stettler**.

Tom Fujii was planning to attend the lunch but got an offer from his son to go golfing. So, we celebrated his upcoming 95th birthday, with him in absentia.

Frank Reckendorf told us he has kept busy with private consulting. He said he was looking forward to reading the annual update letters of the WNTC engineering staff that was disbanded in 1995. **Russ Hatz** is enjoying being a grandfather to the world's cutest baby. **Jim Marron's** Tesla navigation system took him on a roundabout way to get to the lunch, but he made it on time. He was recently inducted into Oregon's softball hall of fame.

Jo Huelshoff told the group she keeps busy in her retirement doing things around the house. **Louise Davis** reported on the goings on in her family including a niece getting engaged. **Joe Sahlfeld** continues to look for a house to buy but has been losing out on the bidding wars. So, he stays busy and enjoys living on the family farm in Hillsboro.

Eldena VanderZanden broke her leg and is currently sporting a titanium rod. **Dick and Kathy Sylvester** are staying close to home. They keep busy making repairs around the house. **Pat Straka** is living with her son. She enjoys her grandchildren as they come and go.

Gale Voge had lots of ice at her house during the recent snowstorm. Even her mailbox was frozen shut. **Bobbie Hart's** husband, Larry, sustained some water damage in his "man cave" during the recent winter storm. With help of a friend, he got things dried out. **Kay Denfeld** had lots of snow at her home in Scappoose.

Thor Thorson said he is volunteering at the State Office. He also mentioned that the State Conservationist position is still vacant. **Leland Saele** told us he had a milestone year reaching both eighty years of age and being married for fifty years. **Lowell Kenedy** advised the group to keep replaced hearing aids, just in case the new ones need repairs. He sprained his wrist when he slipped on the ice.



Don Stettler mentioned that he has a new desktop computer that has a terabyte of storage on its solid-state hard drive. He said he was fortunate to have a techie daughter who could help him get it up and running. Don also asked the group to discuss among themselves as to who would replace him as the lead for the Oregon retirees when the time comes, perhaps sooner than later.

The spring quarter lunch is planned to be held on April 24th at the Stir Crazy Chinese Restaurant in Aloha. More details will be forthcoming.



PENNSYLVANIA

VACANT, ARCSE Representative needed.

Excerpts from the PA Bugle, from **Tim Murphy**, editor.

Hosea Latshaw and **Rose Marie Updegraff** have been busy making arrangements for our annual fall get together to be held on the evening of Sunday, September 15th and Monday, September 16th. The event will be held this year in the Lebanon area.

We are looking for a PA Representative for ARCSE. Many of you are members of ARCSE and are aware that they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NRCS to encourage retirees to mentor new NRCS employees. Our representative would have a role in helping to coordinate that effort with NRCS in PA.

Rose Marie Updegraff writes that she and her daughter **Tracy** had a great time in New York in December. "We saw 'A beautiful Noise,' the **Neil Diamond** story. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, we viewed a special exhibit of Manet and Degas paintings and five Vermeers that were on loan. We enjoyed the wonderful **Andrea Bocelli** at Madison Square Garden. After having Christmas Eve here in PA, we traveled to Chincoteague to join my son-in-law's family.

Don McCandless says "I am doing fine at 90 years of age; just not moving as fast as I did at 60. **Shirley's** kidneys are now at Stage 5 renal failure, and she was placed under hospice care here at the Harmony in State College assisted living facility the first week in November. She is about the same but not sleeping very well. We have our home farm up for sale. We had an auction in August and sold 90% of our material possessions except our two farms.

Our family tree has grown. We now have three children, ten grandchildren, eight great grandchildren and another great grandchild expected in August.

We really downsized in making our move, going from 3300 sq ft to a 600 sq ft apartment that we really like. It's a different lifestyle now. We sold our two vehicles and depend on Harmony transportation for medical appointments, public transportation and our son's family. Meals are served in a dining room three times a day. The staff here are very friendly and caring for the 100 residents.

Alan Wood reports that some of the retired **State Office Boys** meet for breakfast bimonthly in Mechanicsburg.

Fred Bubb offers "A tale of how not to spend retirement: I just celebrated my 91st birthday after over three years of the Internal Revenue Service declaring I was dead. During my 'dead years' IRS in Fresno, Kansas City, Ogden, and Andover continually wrote demanding I provide various records. Never, in spite of my questions, would anyone tell me what was going on. (Editor's Note: Why was the IRS asking a 'dead' person for anything?)"

Tax tip: Residential Energy Credits have become more generous. The old \$500 lifetime credit limit is gone. The new limit is \$1,200 per year for 30% of materials costs for windows, doors, and insulation; 30% of energy audits; 30% of materials and labor, up to \$600 each on central air conditioners, water heaters, furnaces, and electrical panel upgrade to support the previous three items. A separate \$2,000 credit is available for heat pumps and biomass stoves for 30% of costs of materials and labor. All items must meet specific energy efficiency requirements.

From Frank Resides: Time for Frank to Quit Hunting

Some of life's decisions are harder than others. I made one of those very difficult ones on October 21st, 2023. I was on my way home from Huntingdon County where I had a successful deer hunt. I have been hunting there for about twenty years with my friend **Steve**. Born in 1957, he is over two decades younger than me. During the last few years Steve has served as my outfitter. After a kill and field dressing, Steve loads the animal on my truck, hangs it up behind his house, skins it, and splits it in half. When I'm ready to leave, he puts the sides of venison in plastic bags and loads them on my truck – ready to butcher when I get home.

I started this favorite pastime about 1944 or 1945, using a trusty Marlin Model 39 lever action 22 on our property in Centre County. Small game was abundant. I remember one could take 4 rabbits, 6 squirrels and 2 pheasants in a day. I usually got my share. By 1947 I was old enough to get a hunting license and could go for deer. And, the rest is history.

I was thinking on my way home what a wonderful time I had hunting, visiting friends and family and how well my trip had gone. Then I thought about how bad my balance is and how little energy I have – can't walk in the woods without help or by using a walking staff and how many times I've fallen. That's when I decided; it was time.

My decision was tough, but I know it was a good one. I won't think all next summer about if I will go hunting in October. I've donated all my hunting clothes to the Vietnam Veterans Association.

I thank the Lord for watching over and keeping me safe for many years of hunting trips and especially on the last one.

TEXAS NORTH

Mike Bogard, ARCSE Representative
Email: mbogard41@gmail.com

Arnold and Willeene King – we just returned from a Caribbean cruise to the islands of Bonaire, Aruba, and Curacao. Our cruising buddies included three other couples who enjoy traveling together.



Arnold and Willeene King with cruising buddies from Ft. Worth

We stayed busy taking excursions on each island, and that helped keep the pounds off from eating the abundant delicious food provided on the ship.

One of the funniest things happened on the last night at sea. We are all approaching 80 and becoming rather forgetful, putting it mildly. The last night on the ship, we packed our bags, placed them outside the door, and the baggage handlers took the bags for storage until the next morning when we left the ship and headed home. One of our guys got up the next morning to discover he

had packed all of his clothes and had nothing to wear off the ship. So, he left the ship wearing a bed sheet until he could locate his luggage.



Willeene and Arnold King enjoying the sights in Aruba

ARCSE and NRCS have a Memorandum of Understanding to help provide mentors for new employees and enhance communication between the NRCS agency and ARCSE members. Texas State Conservationist **Kristy Oates** was invited by the planning committee to discuss how ARCSE members might provide mentors for new employees. Ms Oates plans to attend our reunion and make a presentation to the attendees.

The Texas SCS/NRCS Retirees Reunion planning committee met recently in Temple, Texas to plan our yearly reunion. Tentative plans are to hold it in Belton, TX, April 15th and 16th, 2024.



(L-R, Front Row) Debbie Melton, Sharon Johnson, Sandy Lehman, Willeene King, Kristy Oates. (L-R: Back Row) Charles Melton, Rhett Johnson, Bailey Mayo, Michael Bogard, Arnold King.

WEST VIRGINIA

Peg Reese, ARCSE Representative

Email: pegreesev@gmail.com

State Engineer **Andy Deichert** is the NRCS Engineer of the year. He is very deserving of this national award. Following is a news release written by Public Affairs Specialist **Joanna Pope**.



NRCS Engineer of the Year Andy Deichert - Building Projects and Partnerships That Last

The USDA-NRCS works with landowners to conserve natural resources on the land. The engineers who work for NRCS not only build conservation practices that help prevent flooding and erosion, but also build relationships that are key to implementing large-scale, long-lasting conservation projects.

As an engineer with NRCS for over 31 years, Deichert has spent his career building a conservation legacy from physical structures on the landscape – from dams that help with flood control to developing successful working relationships with our conservation partners.

Andy Deichert, state conservation engineer with NRCS West Virginia, understands that balance and why he was selected for this year's NRCS Engineer of the Year. It is the foundation of his successful career. Growing up in rural southeastern Pennsylvania, Deichert learned the importance of working with partners to build things that last.



***NRCS Engineer of the Year
Andy Deichert***

According to Deichert, the conservation work NRCS does every day cannot be done alone. "If we don't have partners, we don't have projects."

The majority of Deichert's work focused on watershed projects, which help prevent and reduce flooding across West Virginia. Watershed projects need local organizations to serve as the project sponsor to work with NRCS and local landowners. This partnership is key to watershed project success – and success is critical. There are 170 structures in West Virginia that are classified as "high-hazard-potential dams." Deichert and his team at NRCS ensure that these dams continue to function as intended, protecting people and property from flooding.

When Deichert first started his career with NRCS as an agricultural engineer in Moorefield, West Virginia, dams were being built throughout the state. Today, many of those dams are at the end of their evaluated life, and he is leading rehabilitation efforts to ensure they continue to meet dam safety standards. Dam rehab creates a conservation legacy for future generations by continuing to save lives and protect property in the event of severe flooding.

Deichert said, "The work is interesting and always evolving. Working with the talented people within our agency and with our partners, sponsors, and customers has been the most rewarding. We are fortunate to have strong working relationships with our partners and local sponsors, including the West Virginia Conservation Agency and the 14 Conservation Districts. These relationships are instrumental in advancing our watershed projects."

Technical expertise is essential for every phase of a watershed project, from planning and design through implementation, but none of it would happen without the ongoing support of the local community. Deichert's celebrated career illustrates that point, and his projects solidify this fact: to build anything you have to be both an engineer and an ambassador. Designs need to be technically sound and benefit the local community. The Engineer of the Year Award recognizes Deichert's achievements in the landscape that have continued flood protection controls across West Virginia, while forging a community committed to conservation that will last well into the future. Now that's worth celebrating! Thank you, Andy!

Nominations for Women in Agriculture Awards are due June 1st. Thirty percent of West Virginia farms and agribusiness are now owned or operated by women. Any woman who has made "significant contributions to the establishment, development, advancement or improvement of WV agriculture, Forestry, or specialty crops." **Katie Fitzsimmons**, farmer and NRCS District Conservationist for the McMechen Service Center, won the award in 2021.

NRCS State Conservationist **Jon Bourdon** is currently the Acting Chief of Staff for NRCS Chief **Terry Cosby**.

The seventh annual West Virginia University Day of Giving is March 20th, 2024. Supporters of the WVU Soil Judging Team can donate to two endowments at dayofgiving.wvu.edu. The WV Chapter of the SWCS Soil Judging Endowment (3V1001) provides funds to assist the team with travel expenses to soil judging events. The second option is the Sencindiver Family Soil Judging Endowment (3V1022.).

Ronald Ray Bricker, retired budget officer, passed away Sunday, January 28th, 2024. Ron retired after devoting 23 years to SCS/NRCS. More about his life can be found in the "In Memoriam" section of this newsletter.

WISCONSIN

Deb Legear, ARCSE Representative

Email: deb.legear@gmail.com

Article highlighting the adventures, interests, and talents of Wisconsin retirees!

Compiled by State Representative, Deb LeGear.

Submitted by Kate Kelly:

I am a chief election inspector for the town where I am living. To put that into plain English, I am the poll worker who has taken the extra training involved and is in charge on election day. The clerk's role is to facilitate and put in place everything needed, but the actual election is run by the chief inspector. It's something that needs to be done



Kate Kelly

Submitted by John Campbell from Shawano, WI:

Here is what keeps me going. I am making white cedar log swings, love seats, chairs and foot stools. I do cut my own cedar at various locations. Some places allow me to cut the cedar just for my labor. I do mini reindeer, bluebird houses along with regular bird houses, and squirrel feeders. Keeps me busy.



Cedar bench



Cedar swing



Squirrel feeder



Reindeer

DEADLINE FOR THE MAY/JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS IS APRIL 25TH, 2024.

Submitted by Robert Wilson from Appleton, WI:
I've been sailing, skiing, and relaxing.



Robert Wilson sailing group



Wilson Skiing Group – Robert in the Center

Submitted by: Tom Cogger, formerly in the Ashland FO

I retired in 2010 and ramped up my farm operation, raising hogs, small grains, hay and vegetables. In 2020 I scaled back the farm significantly and now only raise 0.5 ac of potatoes. One of my sons and I went in together and purchased a bandsaw mill. It turns out I really love milling lumber and it has become my main activity. We milled timbers for two of my sons that are building timber frame homes. After about a 40-year hiatus, I got back into oil painting. There never seemed to be time while I was working the NRCS job and farming. My wife Connie I have five grown children and have seven grandchildren and counting. We try to spend as much time as possible with them as they have become the best part of retirement.



Tom Cogger and Oil painting



Tom Cogger by the Sawmill building

Submitted by Kim Georg from Rhinelander, WI

Any time you make it to the end of the year, it was a good year. Hope everyone celebrated my 70th birthday on the 31st.

Has anyone in retirement figured out how we had time to work for those 30+ years? Fishing, hunting, camping, thrifting, etc. – there's not enough time.

This year's husband and wife project was a three-season room addition. Now if we only had a little sunshine, I could turn the heater off.



The three-season room project



The Georg Family – Kim Georg in back Center

Submitted by Kathryn Gorichan from Antigo, WI:

Cruising the World on Princess and visiting with the little girls I helped Raise.



(L-R) The Princess bear and Kathryn



The girls and Kathryn in the center

Submitted by Mike O'Shea from Spooner WI:

Attached are a couple pictures from this fall.



Mike with his buck in Northwest Wisconsin, early November 2023 on public land in NW Wisconsin.



Pheasant hunt: (L-R) Dean Sylla (retiree), Britney the dog, Keith Sengbusch (retiree), friend Paul, Mike OShea (retiree), Friend Shawan and Mike's yellow lab. The pheasant photo is from South Dakota in late October 2023 with three retired NRCS folks in the picture.

Submitted by Keith Widdel from Stevens Point:



Keith Widdel with fish. Fishing Walleyes on Dogtooth on Lake Ontario in 2023. Made several trips to this lake with friends and my sons.

Submitted by Keith Zygowicz from Balsam Lake WI area:

My wife and I were on a cruise from the end of January through February 6th, 2024.

Since retiring, I have joined the ACES staff (very part time) and still do some fun projects with the new field office staff. Mostly assisting on projects with conservation cover, pollinator habitat, forestry items. The majority of my time is on Prescribed Burn plan review with one-on-one training.

Carol and I are traveling as much as possible. Since Carol's retirement in Dec of 2022, we have been to Hawaii, spent 2.5 months in Arizona, an awesome cruise around the Mediterranean with stops in Greece, Italy, Gibraltar, Spain, France, and Montenegro. Just home from another Caribbean Cruise. New stops to us were Tortola and Grand Turks.

Spending a lot of time assisting family members, including moving to new locations, remodel of the residences, general maintenance projects, etc. Caring for grandkids doesn't seem like a hard job, but keeping up with them is a challenge. We have followed the older two to many sporting events, and the youngest crawls all over the house.

We did get involved with an ultra-endurance running sport. I do not do the 50K, 100K or 100 miles, but I did mark trails and assist at the care stations. It's called the Midwest 100, on the ice Age trail near Medford, WI at the end of August.

Our 4 kids, 3 spouses, and 3 grandkids were all able to get home for Christmas.



(L-R) Keith Zygowicz and Carol Zygowicz in Tortola



The Zygowicz Family with spouses and children – Christmas 2023

SENIOR CONSERVATIONISTS: *Senior Conservationists have reached the minimum age of 83 years and have completed the Senior Conservationist Questionnaire (download at <https://arcsecommunications.wordpress.com/senior-conservationists/>). 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.*

Are You a Senior Conservationist?

If you have ever skimmed through the ARCSE Newsletter or browsed the ARCSE website, you have probably seen some people referred to as a "Senior Conservationist." Have you ever wondered what that means? Maybe you have wondered if you could be recognized as a senior conservationist, or how you go about being recognized as a senior conservationist.

The recognition of senior conservationists began many years ago to salute retirees of the Soil Conservation Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service for their efforts in building and maintaining a very strong agency. For most SCS/NRCS retirees, their work with the agency was much more than just a job. Their work centered around an ethic of desiring to protect our soil, water, and other natural resources for future generations by serving the public through promotion of wise voluntary stewardship of the land. Many retirees have continued those efforts into retirement through volunteering, consulting, or just providing perspective and advice to younger generations on how conservation has changed over the years. The Senior Conservationist recognition honors these individuals.

As of December 2023, over 820 retirees have been recognized as senior conservationists. Here are the requirements to be recognized:

- You must be a retiree who worked for the SCS or NRCS
- You must be 83 years of age or older
- You must complete and submit the Senior Conservationist Questionnaire

Please note you are not required to be an ARCSE member to be recognized as a senior conservationist. So, if you know of a deserving retiree who is not a member, please let them know about this recognition so they can apply. And you are certainly welcome to encourage them to join ARCSE too. You also don't need to have worked as a soil conservationist. Any retiree of SCS/NRCS of any discipline is eligible. We have senior conservationists that were engineers, soil scientists, biologists, technicians, area clerks, computer specialists, etc. It doesn't matter, your work helped put conservation on the ground.

After you meet the requirements and are named a senior conservationist, there will be a writeup in the ARCSE newsletter about your career and what you have been up to in retirement, and it will be posted on the ARCSE webpage as well.

Our ARCSE webpage dedicated to senior conservationists is here: <https://arcse.org/senior-conservationists/>. On this site you will find a link to the Senior Conservationist application. If you do not have access to a computer, I would be happy to send an application to you. Just call me, Paul Benedict, at 202-578-8226, and I will get one in the mail to you right away.

Senior Conservationist Chronicler Needed: *As many of you know, our Senior Conservationist Chronicler, **Marc Safley**, passed away a year ago, leaving a huge gap in the association. ARCSE needs someone to take over the great work that Marc was doing in recognizing our senior conservationists. Perhaps you are not old enough to be recognized as a senior conservationist yourself and are looking for a rewarding way to put your energy to use. The Senior Conservationist Chronicler prepares the Senior Conservationist articles for the Newsletter and maintains the file on the Senior Conservationists. You don't do this all by yourself. The Regional Vice Presidents and State Representatives help. So does **Jerry Bernard**, our Editor. As Membership Chair, I work closely with the Chronicler to make sure he/she has an accurate record of who is eligible or approaching eligibility. If you are interested or have questions on what might be involved, please contact ARCSE President **Julie MacSwain**, your regional Vice President, or me.*

SENIOR CONSERVATIONIST CHRONICLE

Senior Conservationist

Nevin Lyle Ulery

Nevin Lyle Ulery was born September 3rd, 1941 at Alverton, PA. He graduated from Connellville Joint Senior High School in 1959 and earned his B.S. degree in Agronomy at Penn State U. (PSU) in June, 1963. He and his wife Judy grew up on adjoining dairy farms in Fayette County, PA and have been married for 60 years. They have two married daughters, Beth of Elizabeth, PA and Amy of Oak Harbor, WA. They also have four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Nevin began his SCS career as a student trainee in York County (1960), Washington County (1961), and Butler County in 1962. Upon graduation from PSU, he worked as a soil conservationist in Bucks, York, and Chester Counties. He served as the Work Unit Conservationist in Northumberland and Erie Counties before becoming RC&D Coordinator for the Penn's Corner RC&D Area. During this time the RC&D Area expanded from five to nine counties in southwestern PA. He also served on the Rural Abandoned Mine Program inventory team in 15 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. He retired in January, 2003.

During his SCS career Nevin received several outstanding performance ratings. He was awarded the ARCSE President's Outstanding Community Service Award in 2011. The PA Project Grass Program gave him a Life-Time Achievement Award. The Westmoreland County Conservation District gave him a Service Award for Contributions to Conservation and the Quality of Life in Westmoreland County. He was also given an award for Volunteerism from the Western PA Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Nevin served in the PA National Guard for six years and was activated by the Governor of PA to help stop rioting in Pittsburgh, PA following the death of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

He has been active in the United Methodist Church since his childhood. At present he serves on the board of trustees of Central Highland Community United Methodist Church at Elizabeth, PA. He also serves as coordinator of the "Hands of the Carpenter" volunteer program, which builds ramps for the elderly and handicapped in the surrounding community. The volunteers also do minor repair work for folks in this urban/rural community. In his "spare time" he enjoys working in his flower and vegetable gardens.

He has served in various positions with the Keystone Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. He also has been active with several Rails to Trails groups in southwest PA. He participated in mission work for several years at Heart and Hand House in Phillipi, WV. He also spent two weeks doing home repairs on the Navaho Reservation at Shiprock, NM. In 2007 he spent two weeks in Ankaase, Ghana in West Africa where he worked with a team from PA to do maintenance and repair work at a local rural hospital.

Judy and Nevin enjoy traveling around the USA and have visited over 30 national parks and all 50 states. They have also travelled to Israel twice and to Egypt and Jordan. In 2022 they visited Costa Rica and have gone on five cruises.

Although he has been dealing with chronic kidney failure for several years, he is in good overall health. Nevin and Judy currently reside at 415 Stoneybrook Drive, Elizabeth, PA 15037; 412-384-3574; njulery@gmail.com.

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 internet, Paul Benedict will be glad to do the search. PLEASE SEND DEATH NOTICES AND OBITUARY INFORMATION DIRECTLY TO PAUL BENEDICT AT 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 www.arcse.org)
Bednarek	2024	ARCSE Life Member Richard James Bednarek, Jr. (63) of Altoona, Iowa, passed away January 25, 2024 from heart complications. He was born April 3, 1960, in North Fond du Lac, Wisconsin to his parents, Richard and Gloria (Warner) Bednarek, Sr. Rick earned his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. He married Elizabeth VanSomeren in 1986. Rick worked for the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service as a soil scientist in Illinois, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Iowa. He retired in 2019 as the State Soil Scientist of Iowa after 33 years of service. Rick was always athletic and enjoyed many different sports. After playing football at the University of Wisconsin, he became an avid golfer and bicyclist. Rick's greatest joy came from spending time with his children and grandchildren. Rick is survived by his wife of 38 years, Elizabeth ; daughters, Hannah (Kurt) Witte and Kelly (Alex) Ager ; and grandchildren, Jasmyn and Carter Witte . Services were held February 17, 2024 at Hamilton's near Highland Memory Gardens Cemetery, in Des Moines, Iowa.
Boeckman	2024	Anthony Paul (Tony) Boeckman (78) of Medford, Oklahoma passed away on January 27, 2024, following a tragic accident. Tony was born in Okeene, Oklahoma, on June 14, 1945, to Anthony Conrad Boeckman and Arlene Luetkemeyer Boeckman . He earned a bachelor's degree in Agronomy from Oklahoma State University. Tony married Jean Shreve on June 1, 1968. Tony worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and was the District Conservationist in Medford for many years. He retired after 34 years of service in 2004. He was an expert at anything pertaining to soil. After his retirement, Tony and Jean traveled in their RV for several years. They visited 49 states in their RV and traveled to Europe last summer. Tony led a very active lifestyle. He enjoyed spending time with Jean and their children, gardening, cooking, golfing, reading, attending church, and spending time with his siblings. Tony's survivors include his wife of 55 years, Jean; son, Drew Boeckman of Grand Prairie, Texas; daughter, Laural Boeckman of Austin, Texas.
Bricker	2024	Ronald Ray Bricker (74) of Masontown, West Virginia, passed away January 28, 2024, at Morgantown Health and Rehabilitation, with family by his side. Ronald was born at home in Fairchance, Pennsylvania, on July 8, 1949, a son of the late Herbert and Myrtle (Hostutler) Bricker . Ronald is a Vietnam Veteran who proudly served in the United States Army. He retired from the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service after 23 years where he served as the Budget

		Officer in the West Virginia State Office. Ronald played the keyboard with the Hilltoppers, Conway Twitty , and Loretta Lynn . He loved his cars and motorcycles. Ronald is survived by his loving wife, Mary Catherine (Radabaugh) Bricker ; two daughters, Rhonda Kay Johnson (Lloyd) and Teresa Shelton (Jeremiah) ; grandchildren, Tamara Johnson, Harley Johnson, Keisha Ponceroff (Zach) , and Jacob Nestor and girlfriend Kira Arbogast ; and soon to be great-grandchild, Adalyn Ponceroff . Chaplain Keaton Forsythe held the funeral service at the Field Funeral Home in Masontown on February 1, 2024. The Preston County Honor Guard and the West Virginia Army National Guard Honor Guard provided full Military Honors at the graveside ceremony at the Pleasant Grove Cemetery.
Castille	2024	Joseph J. Castille (75) of Huntsville, Texas, passed away February 19, 2024, in Willis, Texas. Joe was born August 13, 1948. He was a soil scientist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and worked on several soil surveys in Texas. He retired in 2006. He was preceded in death by his wife Joann Matthews Thomas Castille in 2017. Funeral services were held February 24, 2024, at Greater Zion Missionary Baptist Church. He was laid to rest at Brooke Cemetery, in Huntsville.
Cecil	2024	Loretta June Cecil (74) of Dodge City, Kansas, passed away January 11, 2024, at her home. Loretta was born on June 9, 1949, in Satanta, Kansas, the daughter of John and Doris (Golnick) Meyer . She received an associate degree from Dodge City Community College and then went on to attend Fort Hays State University. She married Jim Cecil on June 13, 1970. Loretta held a few occupations over the years including working at Combs Auto, Sears, Coordinator for the Southwest Kansas Library System, and as an Administrative Assistant in the Dodge City Area Office for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for 17 years, retiring in 2017. She was also part owner of Cecil's BBQ for 25 years. Loretta was an animal lover. She also loved tending to her flowers and garden as well as being outdoors and working in the yard. She also enjoyed traveling. She is survived by her loving husband, Jim Cecil; children, Cory Cecil (Caralea) of Minneola, Kansas, Daniel Cecil (Lindsey) of Dodge City, and Brian Lies (Samantha) of Satanta, Kansas; grandchildren, Trent Cecil, Parker Cecil, Lainey Cecil, Claire Cecil, Annie Cecil , and Harper Lies .
Elder	2024	Brad Duane Elder (74) of Hinton, Oklahoma, passed away February 5, 2024, at his home in Hinton. Brad was born January 10, 1950, in Stillwater, Oklahoma to Vernon Joseph and Violet Marguerite (Jardot) Elder . He earned a bachelor's degree from Oklahoma State University in 1972. After college Brad worked on road construction, in the oilfield, raised pigs and worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Brad served as the District Conservationist at the office in Hinton and then worked in Anadarko, Oklahoma as a Soil Conservationist until he retired in 2011 with over 40 years of service. Brad didn't stay away long and returned to help the Anadarko Field Office staff until November 2015 when he fully retired. On December 19, 2023, Brad married Connie Miller in their family home. He was a loving father and husband and always made his family feel special. Brad enjoyed sports, University of Oklahoma sports, football, the Kansas City Chiefs, and spending time with family and friends. Brad is survived by his wife, Connie Elder of their home in Hinton; daughter, Michelle (Chris) Brandner of Yukon, Oklahoma; two sons, Bradly Elder of Hinton, and Ty Duane Elder of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and two grandchildren, Braden (Anna) Elder and Natalie Elder .
Garrett	2024	Senior Conservationist and Honorary ARCSE Member John Joseph Garrett (95) of Raleigh, North Carolina passed away on January 1, 2024, in Waynesville, North Carolina. John was born on January 17, 1928, in Springfield, Ohio. He was married to his wife of 71 years, the late Mildred Garrison Garrett , whom he met in high school in Sidney, Ohio. After serving in the United States Navy for four years, including duty inside the Artic Circle, John began his family with Mildred in 1950. He graduated from Ohio State University with an Agricultural Engineering Degree on the GI Bill. John went to work for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in Ohio, working as local project engineer, area engineer, and statewide watershed programs staffer. He transferred to the Raleigh, North Carolina SCS State Office as the River Basin and Watershed Coordinator in 1971. He retired from federal service after 38 years in 1990; reaching the position of Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources. After retirement, John consistently volunteered for many years with the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation. He reached the status of "Senior Conservationist" as a member of the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees and was a member of the international Soil and Water Conservation Society. John, and Mildred, were longtime members and volunteers at Capital City Church of Christ, which has become part of Lifepointe Church of Cary. He had a lifelong passion for fishing, and fishing rod building and repair. Other hobbies included landscape plant and flower propagation. John is survived by three sons: J. Keenan Garrett of Athens, Ohio; Timothy E. Garrett (Lynne) of Waynesville, North Carolina, and Randall S. Garrett (Ami) of Southport, North Carolina; four grandchildren: Amanda L. Nowell, Timothy M. Garrett, A. Tyler Garrett , and Jessica E. Morris ; and eight great-grandchildren. A celebration was held February 3, 2024, at Lifepointe Church in Cary, North Carolina, followed by burial at Oakwood Cemetery in Raleigh.
Garrett	2022	Mildred Garrison Garrett (93) of Raleigh, North Carolina, passed away on January 9, 2022. She was the wife of Senior Conservationist and Honorary ARCSE Member John Joseph Garrett who served as the Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service before retiring in 1990. Mildred was a native of Sidney, Ohio, the daughter of the late Aaron and Delma Snider Garrison . Mildred volunteered at Rex Hospital for many years. She was a longtime member of Capital City Church of Christ which has become part of Lifepointe Church in Cary. She enjoyed raising her three sons and supporting their families, including being active in High School Band and Athletic Boosters.
Goertz	2024	Larry Alfred Goertz (75) of Burleson, Texas, passed away unexpectedly on February 20, 2024 at his home. Larry was born on April 17, 1948, in San Antonio, Texas, to Emma and John A. Goertz . He left the farm to attend Texas A&M University on a presidential scholarship and received a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering in 1970. During college summers, Larry interned with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service and was hired by them full time after graduation. Later, he returned to school at the University of Texas at Austin to obtain one of the first Masters of Civil Engineering in Hydraulics degrees ever awarded by the school. Larry worked as a hydraulic and hydrology engineer with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He was one of the first hires at the National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Before that he had worked with the Watershed Planning staff San Marcos, Texas and at the Texas State Office in Temple, Texas. He was known for his grace and good humor, his professionalism and intellect, and his quiet focus on people and service. He was a great mentor to many. Larry was instrumental in working with the team that brought the Corp of Engineer's Hydrologic Engineering Center's (CEIWR-HEC) River Analysis System (HEC-RAS) website to NRCS as well as the development and application of SITES as a rainfall-runoff model for hydraulically proportioning the principal spillway and auxiliary spillway of a dam. After retiring from NRCS in 2006 he went to work as a part-time hydraulic engineer for M&E Consultants.

Heirman	2024	Alan Leo Heirman (77) of Albany, Texas, passed away January 8, 2024. Alan was born November 5, 1946, in Abilene, Texas to Leo Alphonse Heirman and Lucile Elizabeth Gravens Heirman . He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree from Abilene Christian College and then his Master of Science Degree from Texas Tech University. He earned double majors from both institutions in Animal Science and Range Management. On July 26, 1969, he married the love of his life, Mary Louise Brubaker in Abilene, Texas. Alan worked as a Wildlife Biologist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for 36 years. He was a leading pioneer of prescribed burning in the 1970s and later introduced prescribed burning to Shackelford County ranchers where it flourished. At the time of his retirement from NRCS, he had recorded 404 prescribed burns which is the most for the state of Texas and a record that will be hard to break. The Heirman family were active members of the Albany Methodist Church. Alan was very active in community and professional organizations. Alan earned several awards in his life and career including Soil Conservationist of the Year, Outstanding Leader in Fire Ecology, and the Honorary Lone Star Farmer Degree. Alan is survived by his loving wife of 54 years, Mary Heirman of Albany; two daughters, Michelle (Stephen) Kayga of Albany, and Jennifer (Casey) Meador of Abilene; his mother Lucile Heirman of Abilene; and four grandchildren, Blaine Alan Kayga , Brooke Hope Kayga , Aubrey Renae Meador , Shaylee Casey Meador .
Leeper	2024	Shirley Leeper (79) of Woodland, California, passed away about January 4, 2024. She was born at the Woodland Clinic on November 27, 1944, and lived her early life in Esparto, California. She moved to Woodland with her second husband Preston Leeper where she stayed for the rest of her life. Shirley loved people and always wanted to help those most in need or neglected. She worked as a telephone operator and shoe repairman before she came to work for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, where she worked for the California Area 1 office and the California State Office as a data entry specialist, and computer technical analyst. She was never afraid to learn something new and was willing to put the work into that learning. She suffered polio at age 2 and wore a leg brace for most of her life, but never let that stop her from driving a stick-shift or playing tennis with her sons. She loved to travel and the beach was one of her favorite places to just sit and enjoy God's creation. Her husband Preston passed away in 2019. Shirley is survived by her younger brother Steven Johnson , her older brother Vernon Johnson , and both of her sons Michael (Andrea) Pixton and Randy (Denise) Leeper ; and six grandchildren: Natalia Leeper , Brittany Leeper , Kyle Leeper , Cameron Pixton , Joshua Pixton , and Erik Pixton .
Lingle	2024	ARCSE Affiliate Member Erlene Moore Lingle (96) of Auburn, Alabama, passed away peacefully on January 2, 2024, at Bethany House in Auburn. She was preceded in death by her husband, William "Bill" Bryan Lingle in 1988. Bill was the former State Conservationist in Alabama for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. Erlene was a long-time resident of Auburn, where she had been active in Auburn United Methodist Church, a founder of Life Long Learning (which later became Olli), Women's Club, Book Club and strong supporter of all Auburn University athletics. She was an avid golfer, loved to travel, a loyal friend and most of all, loved her family and three great-granddaughters. Erlene is survived by her daughter, Deborah Lingle Steindorff (Gilbert) of Montgomery, Alabama and her grandson, Gilbert C Steindorff, IV (Amy) and three great-granddaughters, Margaret Darby , Elizabeth Ann and Mary Benedict Steindorff , all of Birmingham, Alabama. A graveside service was held January 7, 2024, at Auburn Memorial Park.
Lucas	2024	Cynthia Marie Lucas (71) of Salina, Kansas, passed away on January 9, 2024 at Salina Regional Health Center. Cynthia was born on May 07, 1952, in Griffin, Georgia to parents Thelma Stroud and Sylvester (Spider) Jackson . She was the first female District Commander of the American Legion Post in Griffin, Georgia, organized the Athletes Hall of Fame for local athletes from Griffin, Georgia. She worked at McDowell Funeral Home, Inc., Griffin, Georgia and then with the Willie A. Watkins Funeral Home, Atlanta, Georgia and finally the USDA-Natural Resources in Salina, Kansas where she worked as an Administrative Assistant for the State Office Engineer, and Easements Teams. Cynthia is survived by her husband James Oscar Lucas ; Sons: Anthony Hastings (Jennifer) of Salina, Andre Favors (Bridget) of El Reno, Oklahoma; and Grandchildren: Shameeka Hastings , Lashandre Favors , Quinton Caldwell , Aubreale Favors , Markell Hastings , Zenovia Favors , Makelti Hastings , Makaen Hastings , Makambri Hastings ; and 7 Great Grandchildren.
McNiff	2024	Howard Hugh McNiff (84) of Cook, Nebraska, passed away January 30, 2024, at his home. He was born on the family farm near Riverton, Nebraska on September 21, 1939, to Thomas and Eva (Bach) McNiff . He graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) in 1965 with a Bachelor's Degree in Geology. While he was at UNL, Howard was the commander of the Rifle Team from 1959-1961 and led the Nebraska Rifle Team to a National Championship in 1961. He was united in marriage to Bridget (Gross) McNiff in 1965. Howard served his country in the U.S. Army from his enlistment March 4, 1966, until his honorable discharge May 3, 1968. He was proud of his service in Vietnam as an officer in the 299th Combat Engineer Unit. He received the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 1 Star, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and Army Commendation Medals. He continued to serve in the Army Reserves until 1978 and achieved the rank of Major. Howard was a member of the Cook American Legion and Tecumseh VFW Posts. He was instrumental in getting Cook named "The Best Small Town In America." After college, he worked for the Nebraska Department of Roads as a geologist. He went back to school and attained his engineering degree in 1973. He then began working for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service as an engineer. He also worked for the Five Rivers Resource Conservation and Development area. He was preceded in death by his son Patrick McNiff . He is survived his loving wife Bridget , sons Sean McNiff (Wendy) and children Seamus and Evan , Matthew McNiff (Brenda) and sons Jackson and Benjamin , and Mark McNiff (Jamee) .
Mollenhauer	2024	Jude Mollenhauer (84) of Vienna, Virginia and Columbus, Ohio, passed away January 19, 2024. Jude was the wife of Senior Conservationist and Life ARCSE Member Richard (Rich) L. Duesterhaus . Jude and Rich reconnected at their 50th high-school reunion in 2008 and were married a few years later in 2011. Jude was born on December 16, 1939, in Quincy, Illinois, the daughter of George Lewis Mollenhauer and Jessie Margret Siepker . She received a Bachelor of Music from Curtis Institute of Music, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1962 and a Master of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania in 1969. Jude was a skilled musician and served as the Principal Harpist for the Columbus Symphony for many years. She was on the faculty of Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio since 2001 and the faculty of Capital University in Columbus, Ohio since 2004. Jude is survived by two daughters, Jude Webster Guterl of Bloomfield, New Jersey, and Jennifer Webster Schickram of Delaware, Ohio; her husband of 13 years, Rich Duesterhaus of Vienna, Virginia.; sons-in-law Fred Guterl of Bloomfield and Hanno Schickram of Delaware; grandchildren Sophie Guterl of Minneapolis, Minnesota., Benjamin Guterl of Brooklyn, New York, and Nik Schickram of Columbus, Ohio.
Mull	2022	Carolyn Joyce (Bright) Mull (84) of New Paris, Ohio passed away April 10, 2022, surrounded by many loving family members. She was the wife of ARCSE Life Member Norman Mull , retired Soil Conservation Technician for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. Carolyn was born to Simeon A. and Hilda (Knott) Bright on April 16, 1937, in Richmond,

		Indiana. In 1956, Carolyn met Norman, when he “fell over her desk at work,” and they were married 6 months later that year at her parent's home. Carolyn was also known as “Cycle Sam,” and loved riding motorcycles and managed the Running Springs mini-bike farm and Campground. Carolyn was a faithful member for 59 years at St Paul United Methodist Church in New Paris, Ohio. In addition to her husband Norman, Carolyn's survivors include sons Daniel (Angela) , Jim , Rick (Shelly) and David ; 12 grandchildren: Nigel (Jadwiga) , Amanda (Marc) , Alex (Tyler) , Kristin (Matt) , Ben , Roger (Katie) , Leah (Vinny) , Keaton , Victoria (Chris) , Bethany , Krista (Stephen) and Keith , and 8 great grandchildren.
Northey	2024	William “Bill” Northey (64) of Urbandale, Iowa, passed away suddenly on February 5, 2024. Bill was born on May 27, 1959, to Margaret and Wayne Northey of Spirit Lake, Iowa. He studied Agricultural Business at Iowa State University, graduating in 1981. He was a member of the FarmHouse Fraternity and served as its president during his senior year. In 2004, he earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Southwest Minnesota State University. In 1979, Bill met his wife, Cindy , in Ames, Iowa. They married in 1983. Bill served as president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association and later the National Corn Growers Association. He also served in many other roles, including on the Iowa USDA Farm Service Agency State Committee, on the Ag Ventures Alliance board, as a Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner, and as president and committee chairman of the Dickinson County Farm Bureau. He co-founded and served as president of Innovative Growers, LLC. In 2006, he was elected Secretary of Agriculture for the State of Iowa, a role he proudly held for eleven years. His leadership had a tremendous impact on issues including soil conservation, water quality, renewable energy, foreign animal disease preparedness, and agricultural trade in the state of Iowa and beyond. In 2018, he became the nation's first undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, serving until 2021. Most recently, Bill was the CEO of the Agribusiness Association of Iowa. His contributions as a farmer, public servant, and leader positively impacted countless individuals and communities worldwide. Survivors include his wife, Cindy; his mother, Margaret Northey ; daughters Jessica (Thomas) Meierotto , Emily (Eric) Brown , and Katie (Eric) Mattson ; and six grandchildren: Margaret , Paul , and Eleanor Meierotto , Ava and Jack Brown , and Zoe Mattson .
Oelman	2023	Douglas Bernard Oelmann (76) of Altoona, Iowa, passed away on December 15, 2023. Doug was born on August 25, 1947, in Eldora, Iowa to Bernard and Elma (Abbas) Oelmann . Doug graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Agronomy. He was a Soil Scientist and Assistant State Soil Scientist with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for over 40 years. He enjoyed working on his soil site evaluation business which he had for several years. Doug enjoyed working on his acreage, gardening, fishing, camping, watching Iowa State football, and spending time with family. Doug is survived by his wife of 37 years, Cheri ; their sons Jason Oelmann (Andrew Greenberg) of Des Moines, Iowa, and Matthew Oelmann (Francisca Rivas) of Mitchellville, Iowa. He is also survived by his three children from his previous marriage, Jeff (Leigh) Oelmann of Auburn, Alabama, and their daughters, Janie (Garret) Barr , Anna Oelmann , and Allie Oelmann ; Jean Oelmann of St. Paul, Minnesota, and her daughter Hannah Fischer ; Jennifer Beckett (Travis Accord) of What Cheer, Iowa, and her children Brad Beckett , Brady Beckett , Bryce Beckett (his daughter Cecelia and his fiancé Shyanna Chenet), and Jazmine Beckett .
Peterson	2024	Jermene “Jerri” Kathryn Peterson (85) of Council Bluffs, Iowa, passed away January 18, 2024 at Country House in Council Bluffs. She was the wife of the late Lyle C. Peterson who served as the District Conservationist in Council Bluffs for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service before retiring in 1998. Jerri was born on May 7, 1938, to Elmer and Eleanor (Clausen) Bakken in Northwood, Iowa. Jerri married Floyd Field in 1957. He passed away in 1961. They were blessed by the birth of three children, Rhonda , Brian and Kimberley . Jerri then met Lyle Peterson and they were married on May 31, 1963, at the First Lutheran Church in Northwood, Iowa. Lyle passed away in 2009. Jerri was an Interior Decorator for 25 years, helping to transform people's houses into a home.
Pointer	2022	ARCSE Life Member Thomas Hampton Pointer (95) of Cookeville, Tennessee, passed away August 28, 2022, at Charter Senior Living in Cookeville with his friends and family by his side. Tom was born in Algood, Tennessee on September 8, 1926, to the late Benton Mack Pointer and Orga Hampton Pointer . He joined the US Navy at the end of World War II where he served on the USS Talladega and was honorably discharged. On his return to Tennessee, with the GI bill in hand, he graduated with a degree in Agriculture from Tennessee Polytechnic University. After college he began his career working for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS). During this time, he married Connie B. Huddleston . They had two children: Susan Annette Pointer Jensen-Patterson and Thomas Keith Pointer . The SCS kept him moving throughout Tennessee and the United States. He eventually landed in Washington DC as the Chief Fiscal Examiner for the SCS. He retired in 1982. He retired to Algood, Tennessee where he built a house on the family's city farm and set about enjoying retired life. He was an active member of Algood United Methodist Church, Algood Lions club, Tennessee Tech University Ag Foundation, Middle Tennessee Antique Engine and Tractor Club, National Association of Retired Federal Employees and a State Envirothon Volunteer. He cherished his time with his friends and family. He thought it was neat that he was able to be retired longer than he worked. Tom moved to Cookeville in his later years to an assisted living center. He still enjoyed gallivanting all over town with the help from friends. He is survived by his children Keith and Annette, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren.
Reed	2024	Bobbie Lee Reed (94) of Alva, Oklahoma, passed away February 20, 2024, at his home. Bobbie was born October 27, 1929, in Alva to the late Ray Jesse Reed and Christie Virginia Ritchie-Reed . Bobbie joined the National Guard, where he served in the Korean War. On August 24, 1952, he married Nadine Joy Reed at her parents' home in Dacoma, Oklahoma. Bob worked many jobs over the years. From a cook in the National Guard that helped cultivate his love of cooking (garlic smoked cheese was his specialty) to what most people remember him for, his work for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and farming. He worked 32 years for the SCS before retiring and continued farming well after retirement. During this time, he built the majority of the ponds in Woods County. Bob was preceded in death by his wife Nadine in 2013. He is survived by his two sons, Allyn Lee Reed of Alva and Leland Don Reed of Dacoma, Oklahoma; one daughter, Gayla Marie Schubert (Jon) of Lyons, Kansas; seven grandchildren, Amy Seck (Keith) of Sterling, Kansas, Lezlee Reed of Norman, Oklahoma, Melissa Reed of Enid, Oklahoma, Alicia Reed of Alva, Audrey Widman (Mike) of Manhattan, Kansas, Dustin Schubert (Christy) of Lyons, Kansas, and Tara Morasch (Mason) , of Kansas City, Missouri; 20 great-grandchildren; and many relatives and friends.
Risinger	2023	William “Mike” Michael Risinger (78) of Belton, Texas, passed away unexpectedly on December 31, 2023, in Temple, Texas. He was born on November 26, 1945, in Wellington, Texas. He graduated from Bula High School in 1964 as Valedictorian and continued his education at West Texas State University and South Plains Junior College before ultimately obtaining both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Texas Tech University. It was through mutual friends that he encountered Susan McDonald , and with determination and persistence, they were married on June 2,

		1990. The world has lost a remarkable individual whose life was dedicated to his family, career, and passions. Mike had an illustrious career as a Soil Scientist for the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service. After forty-two years of remarkable service, he retired in June of 2008. Not content with simply enjoying his well-deserved retirement, Mike started his own consulting company called Risinger Soil Survey in Bell County. His expertise and dedication were renowned throughout the industry. Outside of his professional pursuits, Mike found solace in a variety of hobbies and interests. He was an avid angler, golfer, hunter and fisherman. He worked on cars and excelled in the art of knife making. Survivors include his wife, Susan Risinger of Belton, four cherished grandchildren, his daughter in law, Amber Risinger of Temple, numerous family members, and friends. Mike is preceded in death by his son, Dennis Michael Risinger , his daughter, Sara Ruth Minan and her husband, Jose .
Roy	2023	Clifford Roy (96) of Fort Kent, Maine, peacefully passed away at home on December 30, 2023, with family by his side, after a brief period of declining health. Clifford was born on October 20, 1927, in Fort Kent, Maine, a son of George and Leona (Daigle) Roy . He was a veteran of World War II and served in Italy. Clifford graduated from the University of Maine with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Economics and started his career teaching Vocational Agriculture and Sciences at Patten Academy. In 1955 he married Annette LaFrance and they shared a happily married life of 68 years. In 1956 he pursued his career with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. He was District Conservationist from 1956 to 1991 in the Fort Kent, Maine Field Office. He was awarded the "Superior Service Silver Medal", the highest award presented in USDA. He was well respected by coworkers for his sharp wit and sense of humor. He retired in 1991 after 35 years of service. Clifford was a communicant of St. Louis parish, made his Cursillo and was a Eucharistic minister for 24 years, along with his wife. He was a 4th degree honorary member of Knights of Columbus, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Fort Kent Senior Citizens Club. Cliff was predeceased by his son-in-law, Timothy McCue . Surviving Cliff are his beloved wife Annette of 68 years, daughter Janice McCue , son David Roy (Debbie) , son John Roy (Karen) , and daughter Sharon Saucier (Dean) ; grandchildren Ryan Roy and fiancé Lauren with children Ashlynn and Rias , Daniel McCue (Barbara) with children Burns and Briar , Zachary Roy , Jeremy Saucier and fiancé Ashley Williams , Ryan Olberding (Kristen) and children Madison and Brendan , and Natalie Olberding .
Rucker	2024	Senior Conservationist and longtime ARCSE Member Harry Sidney Rucker, Jr. (95) of Heber Springs, Arkansas, passed away January 3, 2024, in Heber Springs. Harry was born August 30, 1928, to Harry Rucker, Sr. and Virgie Hazzard Rucker . He grew up in Comyn, Texas. Harry was a graduate of Tarleton State College, and The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (Texas A&M). He served in the United States Army in Europe in from 1945 to 1947. Harry began his career with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in 1953 in Robert Lee, Texas. He served as District Conservationist in Sweetwater, Texas from 1955 to 1966 and then served as District Conservationist in Canyon, Texas from 1966 to 1968. In 1968, Harry was promoted to Area Conservationist in Amarillo, Texas, serving from 1968 to 1973. In 1973, Harry and his family moved to Alexandria, Louisiana where he served as Assistant-, Deputy- and finally State Conservationist for Louisiana. Harry retired from the USDA Soil Conservation Service in 1985. Upon Retirement, Harry and Dorothy declared Louisiana too hot to live in during the summertime and spent the summers at their cabin in Colorado. Harry was a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Alexandria, Louisiana. In 2021. Harry moved to Heber Springs, Arkansas to be closer to his son, Roger. Harry Rucker is preceded in death by his wife of 73 years, Dorothy Jean Rucker , and his daughter Karen Rucker Garner . He is survived by his sons Cliff (Judith) Rucker of Lufkin, Texas and Roger (Linda) Rucker of Edgemont, Arkansas, and his son-in-law Steve Garner of Weatherford, Texas. Harry is also survived by 9 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.
Skala	2023	ARCSE Member Ronnie Glen Skala (64) of Colorado Springs, Colorado (formerly of Temple, Texas) passed away October 30 or 31, 2023. Ronnie was born August 18, 1959, to Henry Edward Skala Sr. and Shirley Ann Meier Skala . He worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), most recently as a Hydraulic Engineer in the Temple, Texas State Office. He took an early retirement in 2009. Note: An obituary for Ronnie was not available. I was able to find out that Ronnie had sold his home in Temple, Texas in June of 2023 and moved to another property he owned in Colorado Springs. He had been experiencing unexplained health problems. Ronnie's older brother, Henry Edward Skala Jr. , also worked for NRCS and passed away in 2010 at age 53. Ronnie is survived by a son, Stephen Skala (Lindsay) of Killeen, Texas.
Svetlik	2023	Dexter James Svetlik (70) of rural Witting, Texas (8 miles southeast of Moulton, Texas) passed away on December 30, 2023, after a lengthy battle with heart disease. Dexter was born in Hallettsville, Texas to Anton and Frances Svetlik . Dexter went on to attend Texas A&M University, graduating with a degree in Horticulture in 1975. After college, he began his career with Greenleaf Nursery in El Campo, Texas, following his love of plants, nature, and the outdoors. In 1982, he continued his career with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service, now known as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), serving in various roles, including serving as a Soil Conservationist, Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator, Area Conservationist and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations. After 28 years of service, Dexter retired from the NRCS in 2011 to his farm in the Witting, Texas area. After retirement he spent his time tending to his cattle and pecan trees. He had a soft spot in his heart and made a home for many kittens and puppies that had lost their way. He would often be seen walking the local roads, following his strict exercise routine. Dexter is survived by five brothers: Dennis of Witting ; Larry (Carolyn) of Hallettsville; Gary (Beverly) of Shiner, Texas; Archie (Virginia) of Smithville, Texas; Kenneth (Mary Ann) of Hurst, Texas; and five sisters: Blanche Cavarretta (Roy) , Joyce Timm (Carl) , Diane Munson (John) all of Hallettsville; Val Hardt (Tim) of Castroville, Texas; and Debbie Barron (Bill) of Katy, Texas. He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews. Dexter was preceded in death by his brother Patrick Svetlik and nephew/godchild Ryan Munson .
Vavra	2023	Geraldine (Deany) Vavra (96) Boerne, Texas (formerly of Bryan, Texas) passed away surrounded by loving family members on December 15, 2023. Deany was the wife of Senior Conservationist and Honorary ARCSE member Martin E. Vavra who passed away 2 months earlier in October 2013. Deany was born July 21, 1927, in Kurten, Texas, the daughter of William Fritz and Matilda (Stroppe) Schram . After high school graduation she was employed at Texas A&M University as a laboratory technician in the Meats Research Center for seven years. In 1950, Deany met Martin at a dance, and they married in 1951. She then worked as a secretary for the Martin County Hospital. Deany was very active with her children serving five years as a den mother for Cub Scouts, involved in Parent Teacher and Homeroom Mother activities and Little League baseball. She enjoyed sewing, quilting and was very talented in making costume jewelry and creating her own designs. After the children started high school, Deany spent the next 12 years working for the federal government before retiring in 1982. She is survived by her daughter Karen (Robert) Freeman of Boerne; son Dennis (Alicia) Vavra of Houston, Texas; grandchildren, William (Melissa) Freeman , Robert (Rachael) Freeman ,

		Adrienne Vavra, and Alexis (Jason) Thurston; and great grandchildren Clara Nell, Finley, and Dean Freeman; Tyler, McKayla, and Gabriel Thurston.
Webb	2024	Herbert "Herb" E. Webb (64) of Polson, Montana, passed away on January 6, 2024, at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula, Montana. He was born October 22, 1959, in Yreka, California to James and Mary Coralee (Dumond) Webb . He attended Southeastern Oklahoma State University and completed his master's degree in Range Management from North Dakota State University. On May 27, 1989, Herb married Vickey Skelton in Chinook Montana. Herb worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, finishing his career as the Tribal Conservationist for the Pablo Field Office. He retired on December 31, 2022, after 39 years, having worked in Choteau, Chinook, and Ronan/Pablo, Montana. Herb was active in the Facebook group, the Cardiac Athletes and was a member of the American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Association for NRCS and Society of American Indian Government Employees. Herb was very artistic and created shadow boxes and awards for AIANEA and SAIGE. He did custom framing and matting and created art in many different mediums including pen and ink, beads, watercolors, and many others. Herb also worked with taxidermy and was proficient in carpentry and woodworking. Herb enjoyed fishing Flathead Lake with his brothers-in-law, playing poker with friends and attending mountain man rendezvous. He had a great sense of humor and loved pulling a fast one on friends and family. Herb's survivors include his wife of 34 years, Vickey, his father Jim Webb , brother, John Webb , mother-in-law, Renie Skelton , sisters-in-law, Margi Salisbury, Sharon (Mark) Bosch, Andi (Tom) Pindell , several nieces and nephews and many aunts and uncles. He will be greatly missed by his dogs, Ofi and Zen.
Williams	2023	ARCSE Life Member Clifford Lee Williams (90) of Sayre, Oklahoma passed away August 10, 2023. Clifford was born March 20, 1933, in a two-room house near the banks of Sandstone Creek to Raymond Lee and Dulcie Bell (Marshall) Williams . He attended Oklahoma A&M College and then served in the United States Army in artillery during the Korean Conflict. Following his discharge, he returned to Oklahoma A&M College where he completed his undergraduate and master's degree in Agronomy. He married Bobbie Vernell Hayden on January 24, 1953, at his parent's home. He worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in Montana, New York, Colorado, and Texas and then the National Plant Materials Center in Beltsville, Maryland. During his career, he completed graduate and post graduate studies including courses at the USDA Graduate School in Washington, D.C. Clifford's primary work was in the field of plant materials where he was involved in the development and release of several grasses for use in the Great Plains Region. He was privileged to serve as a consultant on major federal highways, airports, railroad construction sites and military installations. Clifford was an avid student of wind erosion in the Southern Great Plains Region. He was also an advocate of the certification for Agronomist and worked hard for the success of the program. After retirement in 1986, he spent the next 30 years raising black angus cattle back on his old family farm in Sayre, Oklahoma. He served many years on the Beckham County Rural Water District No. 3 Board of Directors. He also inherited his dad's job of caring for the Berlin Cemetery. Clifford was a long-time member of the Church of Christ. He is survived by his two sons, Don (Elizabeth) of Golden, Colorado, and Tom (Gina) of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and one granddaughter, Sarah Stephanie Williams of Elk City, Oklahoma. He was preceded in death by his wife Bobbie in 2020. He was laid to rest in the Berlin Cemetery which lies within the drainage area of Sandstone Creek