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# NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Retired Conservation Service Employees

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

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Becky Fletcher, ARCSE President**

Greetings Fellow Members! I hope you are enjoying your summer and making lots of memories.

It is my honor to be taking the helm as president of ARCSE at the annual meeting on August 4<sup>th</sup> in Costa Mesa, CA. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving on the board since 2020, first as the Midwest region vice president and then as president-elect. I already know many of you (or at least recognize your name), and I'm looking forward to getting to know those of you whom I have not met.

I want to thank **Julie MacSwain** for her outstanding leadership over the past two years. We have taken huge strides to create a stronger social media presence, improve our administration and operations, collaborate with new partners, and bring in new members. Julie and her predecessor **Arnold King** have worked to bring ARCSE to a whole new level of operation, and I know I have big shoes to fill.

This fiscal year is off to a great start with a new annual plan of work in place, plans for another membership drive, continued efforts in our mentoring program, support of New Horizons and NRCS in the Agricultural Conservation Employees Service (ACES) program, and an exciting new way for members who are musicians to share their interest and talents with us.

Through our close working relationship with SWCS we have two special interns working with us this summer: **Chloe Haymaker**, Texas A&M; and **Ismael DeLara**, Purdue University. Their interest in learning about our organization and enthusiasm in working together on projects has been most enjoyable. Read more about Chloe and Ismael in this issue of the newsletter.

## ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED CONSERVATION SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Please help me welcome our new board members: **Janet Perry**, regional vice president for the East; **John Mueller**, regional vice president for the south; and **Becky Ross**, treasurer. I'm looking forward to working with these folks. **Donna Beggs**, **Melvin Womack** and **Bill Kuenstler** will be greatly missed, and I thank them for their outstanding work and commitment to ARCSE.

In closing, it's hard to write or even carry on a conversation these days without talking about the uncertainty of our times. Even when things are quieter, life still seems off balance. I hope you received Julie's recent email message. If not, I'm sharing it again here because I think it's a message we all need to hear and a great reminder that many of our SCS/NRCS (and FPAC) family need to hear from us.

*"Our support of NRCS and FPAC employees – both still working and recently retired/resigned is critical. Feeling connected and that someone cares when your world is so uncertain is important. I encourage you to reach out to others."*

## Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE) Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of ARCSE is taking place in Costa Mesa, California. This year's conference will take place at the Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa, Monday, August 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, August 4, 1:30pm–4pm (This meeting will be held both in person and via Zoom).

ARCSE Annual Business Meeting, 1:30pm–3pm

The annual meeting is open to association members and others interested in learning more about organization. Leadership from NRCS, SWCS, ARCSE, and other organizations will speak on topics involving conservation policy and program direction, project updates and other priority ARCSE interests. The ARCSE awards ceremony will be held during the meeting to honor award recipients for distinguished service, community service and meritorious service.

Conservation and Water Issues in Southern California, 3:20pm–4pm

*Paul Benedict, NRCS Retired Assistant State Conservationist, Field Operations and Arnelis Crespo, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, Field Operations (invited)*

## New ARCSE President-Elect

Hello! **Robin Martinek**, ARCSE president-elect, from Prior Lake Minnesota. I am looking forward to serving ARCSE, and to meeting as many of you as possible in the coming year. I worked as a soil scientist for the University of Nebraska for six months

after I graduated from college, and then was hired for my dream job, following in my father's footsteps working for SCS/NRCS. I worked as a soil conservationist in Nebraska and then moved to Minnesota (closer to Wisconsin) to work as a district conservationist, water quality specialist, and State Agronomist for the rest of my career. I retired in 2011 after 32 years and now enjoy a "leisurely" life of drinking coffee (and Spotted Cow beer and Door County Gin), playing golf, riding my new ebike, camping with my husband **Rick** in our Scamp trailer, while looking for bears, bowling in a winter league, attending music concerts and plays, and trying new things like attending the opera. I am definitely part of the "how did I have time to work" club. I always enjoy reading this newsletter and seeing all the things that are going on with our members around the country, and I am excited to be a part of this dynamic organization.



### **Exploring a New Passion: Poetry in Retirement**

—By Julie MacSwain

"In the last few months, I've discovered an unexpected and fulfilling new hobby—writing poetry. While I've always appreciated the written word, this is a brand-new venture for me, and I'm surprised by how much joy and reflection it brings.

What started as simple curiosity has quickly become a meaningful creative outlet. Whether I'm inspired by nature, memories, or everyday moments, putting words to paper in a poetic way has added a fresh sense of purpose and fun to my days.

As I continue learning and experimenting with different styles and themes, I'm excited to see where this poetic path leads. Maybe I'll even share a few verses in future issues!"

*Editor's Note: See Julie's tribute to the Goobys in the Montana section.*

### **Connect and Grow—ARCSE Symposium**

ARCSE is holding our first-ever symposium at the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual SWCS Conference on August 4<sup>th</sup>. We have invited senior NRCS leaders, both retired and working, to join the informative and interactive mentoring session.

**Cheryl Simmons, Becky Fletcher, Craig Derickson and Julie MacSwain** have worked on a program that promotes what ARCSE is all about—helping members stay connected with each other and with NRCS.

Topics will include

- *Connecting and growing across generations of conservationists.*
- *"You Can Become an Amazing Mentor" – a short workshop designed for those who are interested in becoming a mentor or brushing up on their skills.*
- *Informal Connections and Collaborations—A "speed mentoring session" with senior conservationists and key staff.*

### **2025 ARCSE Election Results**

ARCSE conducts an election every odd year because each officer serves two-year terms. We conducted the election and now have duly-elected officers as follow:

President-Elect	<b>Robin Martinek, Minnesota</b>	replacing <b>Becky Fletcher</b> our new President to be installed during our August annual meeting.
Vice President, South	<b>John Mueller, Texas</b>	replacing <b>Bill Kuenstler</b> who served as the South VP for the past three terms. Thanks Bill for your assistance during those years. Welcome aboard John.
Vice President, Mid-west	<b>Chris Tippie, Indiana</b>	replacing <b>Becky Fletcher</b> who was appointed president elect after the position became vacant during the previous year.
Vice President, West	<b>Bill Ward, California</b>	Thanks, Bill for your continued service.
Vice President, East	<b>Janet Perry, Virginia</b>	replacing <b>Melvin Womack</b> who served as VP for the East region for several years. Thanks, Melvin for your assistance.

Note also That **Becky Ross** is the new Treasurer, replacing **Donna Beggs** who has retired.

**WANTED!**



**MUSICIANS**  
from the  
Soil Conservation Service  
and the  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
for a special project to document  
**Biographies of Musicians from the SCS & NRCS**

For more information and how to apply, go to:  
[ARCSE.org/Resources/Musicians](http://ARCSE.org/Resources/Musicians)

The Project is sponsored by the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees.

The SCS/NRCS Musicians "Team" is in the process of identifying and writing Biographies of Musicians from the SCS & NRCS. See Bill Ward's California report for all of the details about this exciting new project for Musicians from the SCS & NRCS.

## NOTES FROM THE POTOMAC

*—Craig Derickson, retired USDA-NRCS*

### **Jimmy Emmons Sworn in as Assistant Chief of NRCS**

On May 20, 2025, the [Oklahoma Farm Report](#) newspaper announced that **Jimmy Emmons** was sworn in as the Assistant Chief of the NRCS – the number two person in the NRCS agency. Last fall Emmons was being considered by the Trump Transition team for a top position at USDA. However, the President-selected confidant **Brooke Rollins** to be the Secretary of Agriculture. ARCSE leadership and members congratulate Jimmy on his appointment as Assistant Chief and welcome him to NRCS.

According to the [Oklahoma Farm Report](#), Jimmy's friend and Congressman, **Frank Lucas**, was on hand for the swearing-in at the USDA in Washington. Lucas writes of Emmons "As a lifelong Oklahoman." He said: "Jimmy has spent years working around the state and across the country promoting innovative and voluntary conservation practices. Having someone like this in a position to lead farm policy isn't just beneficial for Oklahoma, but the entire country and the world." Lucas went on to say: "I am proud of my longtime friend and fellow Oklahoman for his willingness to serve the nation and his commitment to the American farmer."

The Oklahoma paper described Jimmy's agriculture operation and wrote: "Jimmy Emmons is the third generation on the family farm in Dewey County. He and his wife **Ginger** have been farming and ranching together since 1980. They have a diverse 2,000-acre cropping operation, growing wheat, soybeans, sesame, sunflowers, irrigated dairy alfalfa hay, canola, grain sorghum and several cover crops for seed."

Jimmy and Ginger also have a 250 cow/calf herd and take in yearling cattle for custom grazing on the nearly 6,000 acres of native range. Ginger is the primary cattle manager in the operation. The Emmons utilize their range and forage resources grown on the crops ground to keep the native grasses and soils healthy to maximize biological diversity and animal health."

The trademark phrase that is Jimmy Emmons is well known for is "Long Live the Soil." Emmons' passion for soil health will be carried across the country in his new role at the NRCS. See:

<https://www.oklahomafarmreport.com/okfr/2025/05/20/long-live-the-soil-jimmy-emmons-sworn-in-as-assistant-chief-of-nrcs/>

### **USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins Talks About Plans for Reorganization**

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, while speaking to the National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB) members, Secretary Rollins confirmed that 15,000 employees left USDA through a deferred resignation program. She said: "We are planning to unveil the new USDA reorganization plan very soon." Rollins said addressing concerns about staffing levels and potential "brain drain" due to deferred resignations are a top priority for USDA leadership." She clarified, "USDA has around 106,000 employees in total. Every year, we lose, just by attrition, between eight to 10,000 of those employees. So while 15,000 is blasting across a lot of headlines right now, at the end of the day, through the DRP, hopefully the goal is that it isn't too much of a difference." For more see

<https://www.oklahomafarmreport.com/okfr/2025/05/06/usda-secretary-rollins-addresses-farm-broadcasters-outlines-administrations-ag-agenda/>

### **Robert Bonnie Concerned About Loss of USDA Employees**

**Robert Bonnie**, former USDA undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) in the Biden administration, told reporters at an April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting that he is "very concerned that USDA is being weakened" by the Trump administration's staffing and budget cuts and the impact on areas ranging from conservation to fighting forest fires.

Robert Bonnie said: "I am very concerned. I know many people in agriculture are, that USDA is being severely weakened right now, severely weakened as an institution to serve agriculture, to serve the American people, to serve food production."

While full details have not yet been announced, USDA is expected to make significant cuts to staffing across most agencies. USDA has offered multiple plans to employees for a deferred resignation program to agree to leave the agency and receive pay through the end of the fiscal year. Employees have been told to expect more "reduction in force" cuts along with consolidation and office closings around the country.

Bonnie has deep concerns about the loss of senior leaders and technical experts at NRCS. For example, Bonnie noted that NRCS technical specialists worked hard to develop a 15-year initiative, the Working Lands for Wildlife program. "It is arguably one of the most important landscape level conservation initiatives," covering more than 9 million acres and "a couple thousand ranchers, all voluntary, all incentive based," pointing out how controversial it was to develop the sage grouse program. Bonnie said it was terrible for USDA to lose "that type of leadership, creativity."

He also mentioned concerns about the USDA's ability to respond to natural disasters and said "75% of the federal government's wildfire response sits at USDA, and that he is worried as the summer fire season approaches." Bonnie also raised concerns about USDA's established relationships with conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited that could be setback as well because of cuts.

Bonnie, who developed the Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities during the Biden administration, also noted that during the Obama administration farmers "ran the other way from climate policy;" but during the Biden years, the government and the farmers worked together on agriculture and forestry."

See more from [Farm Progress](#) magazine at:

<https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/news/article/2025/04/29/biden-ag-undersecretary-concerned#>

### **One Big Beautiful Bill - Impacts On NRCS**

On Friday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, the White House released the administration's FY2026 President's Budget Request (PBR) to Congress. This release included detailed information about the proposed funding levels for various USDA programs, according to the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. "The \$1.691 trillion base request includes \$1.011 trillion in discretionary defense spending and \$601 billion in non-defense discretionary spending. The PBR decreases non-defense discretionary spending by 22.6 percent to its lowest level since 2017. Meanwhile, the PBR increases defense spending by 13 percent." See more from the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities at:

<https://www.aplu.org/wp-content/uploads/FY26-PBR-Analysis-1.pdf>

A less detailed "skinny budget" was released earlier, on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, but the more detailed request, including the explanatory notes, came later. The House Appropriations Committee then released a draft funding bill on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025, based on the President's budget. Under the leadership of Speaker **Mike Johnson**, the House of Representatives passed a budget reconciliation bill on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, titled the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," with a narrow 215–214 vote. "The reconciliation process allows Congress to pass legislation related to the budget with a simple majority in the Senate, bypassing the usual 60-vote threshold. This bill, which aims to extend expiring tax cuts and includes provisions related to healthcare, social safety nets, and immigration, now moves to the Senate for consideration." See more from the National Association of Counties at:

<https://www.naco.org/articles/trump-skinny-budget-could-impact-counties-big-way-local-leaders-say>

The House budget bill significantly impacts NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) by "reducing funding and staff, which could limit farmers' access to conservation programs and services. Discretionary funding for CTA is slated to decrease dramatically, impacting the ability of NRCS staff to assist farmers with planning and implementing conservation practices." See more from [Farm Week Now](#) at:

[https://www.farmweeknow.com/policy/national/usda-budget-plan-slashes-conservation-staff-members/article\\_5be3904f-b1f0-4cda-ad11-4b7349a9137a.html](https://www.farmweeknow.com/policy/national/usda-budget-plan-slashes-conservation-staff-members/article_5be3904f-b1f0-4cda-ad11-4b7349a9137a.html).

The budget proposed for USDA "includes a decrease in discretionary funding for CTA, with some sources suggesting a complete elimination of discretionary funding for CTA in FY 2026, which could lead to a substantial reduction in the number of farmers who can access these services. CTA also serves as a key entry point for farmers into other USDA conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), so reduced CTA funding could limit access to these programs as well." See more from [DTN Farm Progress](#) at:

<https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/news/article/2025/06/03/usda-budget-plan-slashes-technical>.

The proposed budget also "calls for a significant reduction in NRCS staff, potentially leading to a shortage of personnel to provide technical assistance to farmers. The reduced funding and staffing could impact the ability of NRCS to support farmers in implementing various conservation practices, including cover crops, nutrient management, wetland restoration, and habitat improvement." See more from [Farm Progress](#):

<https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/news/article/2025/06/03/usda-budget-plan-slashes-technical>.

The proposed reductions in NRCS funding and staffing "could have long-term implications for the health of agricultural lands and the ability of farmers to implement sustainable practices, potentially impacting soil health, water quality, and overall environmental outcomes." See more from [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) at:

<https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/usda-staffing-cuts-hurt-farmers-and-rural-communities/>.

### **Budget Explanatory Notes**

The USDA's explanatory notes for the FY2026 budget were released on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025. "Budget explanatory notes are a detailed narrative justification accompanying a budget, explaining the reasoning behind each cost estimate. They clarify how costs are calculated, what assumptions were made, and why specific amounts were allocated. These notes are crucial for transparency, allowing reviewers to understand the budget's foundation, and assess its reasonableness." See more from [The George Washington University](#) at:

<https://sponsoredprojects.gwu.edu/budget-preparation>

The Explanatory Notes for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides the following information for proposed changes to the NRCS fiscal year (FY) 2026 budget.

**NRCS Private Lands Conservation Operations:** This account, formerly called Conservation Operations, is the primary funding source for the NRCS. According to the Congressional Research Service, “the Private Lands Conservation Operations account primarily funds Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), which includes providing conservation planning and implementation support to landowners and agricultural producers. Essentially, it’s the account that enables NRCS to deliver its core mission of helping people help the land by providing expertise and resources for conservation on private lands.” See: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R46971>.

The Private Lands Conservation Operations and associated programs are proposed to receive a net decrease of \$783,495,000 and a decrease of 2,636 staff years (\$895,754,000 and 3,109 staff years available in 2025).

The reductions in funding and staffing are as follow: (\* NOTE—all of the following explanatory notes are taken from the USDA **Explanatory Notes** document) — see citation below)

- (1) A decrease of \$776,495,000 and a decrease of 2,546 Staff years in the **Conservation Technical Assistance Program** (\$776,495,000 and 2,546 staff years available in 2025). No new funding request in 2026. Farmers will continue to receive conservation technical and financial assistance, but with efficiencies that reflect greater reliance on State and local conservation districts. There are also sufficient mandatory funds to provide CTA.
- (2) No change in funding and a decrease of 59 staff years for the **Soil Survey Program** (\$86,757,000 and 421 staff years available in 2025). No change in funding. The program will focus on high priority projects identified by states, technical soil services, and maintaining the soil and ecological inventories and databases for use by the farmers and producers.
- (3) No change in funding and a decrease of 12 staff years for the **Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program** (\$14,751,000 and 61 staff years available in 2025). No change in funding. The Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program will continue to provide western water resources information, serving large economic benefits to agricultural production and supporting critical public safety with regard to fire, floods, and drought.
- (4) No change in funding and a decrease of 13 staff years for the **Plant Material Centers Program** (\$10,751,000 and 75 staff years available in 2025). No change in funding. The program will continue to focus on high priority plant materials needs and increasing efficiencies to maximize the potential of each Plant Materials Center to support NRCS conservation delivery to the extent of their staffing.
- (5) A decrease of \$7,000,000 and a decrease of 5 staff years in the **Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Program** (\$7,000,000 and 5 staff years available in 2025). No new funding request in 2026. This decrease in funding and staff years will require the Department to administer the program. This is in line with our ARRP Phase II plan.
- (6) No change in funding and a decrease of 1 staff year for the **Healthy Forests Reserve Program** (No funding and 1 staff year available in 2025). No change in funding.

For more information and details on the NRCS budget cuts see:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/28-2026-CJ-NRCS.pdf>.

#### **NACD Support for NRCS Funding**

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, **Jeremy Peters**, Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of Conservation Districts, wrote a letter to NACD State/Territory Presidents and Executive Directors and members to explain the Trump administration’s vision for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) funding across the federal government.

CEO Peters wrote: “Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) supports our conservation workforce, conservation planning, and the extension of specialized technical assistance to producers, and is considered the backbone of USDA’s conservation programs. Earlier this year, NACD led a letter requesting that a \$1.2 billion budget be considered for Conservation Operations (CO), which funds CTA. We remain hopeful that this request is reflected in the Appropriations process.” See more from NACD at: <https://www.nacdnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025-06-06-NACD-Update.pdf>

The NACD letter included funding levels proposed by the House for the NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance account. You will see in the table below that the House has proposed 850 million for CTA, rather than the 122 million suggested in the President’s budget.

<b>Program (millions)</b>	<b>2025 Enacted</b>	<b>President 2026</b>	<b>House Bill</b>
Conservation Operations (CTA)	896 million	112 million	850 million

The NACD letter to State leaders also contained information on dramatic budget cuts to NRCS watershed programs and operations. In the President’s budget you will see that all Watershed programs and funding were proposed to receive no funding. The table below shows funding included in the House bill that was passed in late May and sent to the Senate. The President’s budget also provided no funding for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities account. It is unclear at this time what actions the Senate might take regarding the NRCS budget for FY 2026 for CTA and Watershed programs.

Program (millions)	2025 Enacted	President 2026	House Bill
Watershed & Flood Prevention Ops	47 million	0	35 million
Small Watershed Ops (PL566)	199 million	0	N/A
Emergency WS Protection Ops	299 million	0	N/A
Watershed Rehab Program	9 million	0	7 million

### Budget Cuts in the House Budget Bill

The House bill, titled the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025," includes significant budget cuts, particularly in social safety net programs like Medicaid and SNAP (food assistance), while also proposing tax cuts. These cuts are intended to offset the costs of extending and expanding tax breaks, including making the 2017 Trump tax cuts permanent. See more from National Public Radio at:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/06/17/nx-s1-5435312/medicaid-cuts-big-beautiful-bill-trump-kff-poll>

Here's a summary of the key cuts:

**Medicaid:** The bill proposes substantial cuts to Medicaid, potentially reaching \$700 billion over ten years, impacting millions of Americans who rely on the program for healthcare. See more from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities at:

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/house-republican-bill-would-cut-medicaid-funding-to-states-providing-own-health>

**SNAP (Food Assistance):** The bill includes deep cuts to SNAP, potentially impacting millions of low-income families. These cuts include reducing federal funding for states, expanding work requirements, and ending assistance for some immigrants. See more from Public Broadcast Service at:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/06/16/nx-s1-5432809/trump-snap-food-assistance#:~:text=The%20bill%20proposes%20deep%20cuts%20to%20SNAP%20and%20the%20Food%20Assistance%20Program%20%28TANF%29%20across%20the%20country.>

**Clean Energy Tax Credits:** The bill proposes to scale back tax credits for clean energy, including the electric vehicle tax credit, and credits for renewable energy production. See more from National Public Radio at:

<https://www.npr.org/2025/06/17/g-s1-73126/senate-republican-tax-spending>.

**Other Potential Cuts:** The bill also includes provisions that could lead to higher electricity costs and changes to student loan policies. See more from Center for American Progress at:

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/house-republicans-big-beautiful-bill-would-make-health-care-more-expensive-for-americans-with-medicare-and-other-insurance/>

**Increases to National Debt Ceiling:** The bill also includes provisions that could increase the deficit, despite the proposed spending cuts, due to the scale of the proposed tax cuts. See more from the Committee for Responsible Federal Budget at:

<https://www.crfb.org/press-releases/raise-debt-ceiling-reduce-debt>.

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

**Paul Benedict, Membership Chair**

### New Life Member

Allan Colwick – Belton, Texas

### New Members

Mark P. Bushman – Katy, Texas

Lenore Vasilas - Havre de Grace, Maryland

Lynn D. Gray – Grapeland, Texas

Jennifer Foster – Merced, California

Mary Thompson – Union, Maine

Albert "Hank" Henry, Jr. – Burlington, North Carolina

Michael Koehler – Bloomer, Wisconsin

Kevin McCall – Ames, Iowa

Christopher W. Smith – Goldsboro, North Carolina

Jill Reinhart – Zionsville, Indiana

Kurtis Hoeft - Charles City, Iowa

Gary J. Reckner – Gordonsville, Tennessee

Robert Roy - Clovis, California

### New Affiliate Member

Diane Petit – Bellingham, Massachusetts

### ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES Due by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026

Member \$25 per year

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*

## Welcome To Our Summer Interns!

Meet **Chloe Hamaker** and **Ismael De Lara**! Chloe and Ismael have already jumped into work on their summer projects with SWCS and ARCSE. Since we began this partnership a few years ago, interns have significantly helped ARCSE with our social media efforts. This year they are creating a social media calendar, helping us establish a YouTube channel, reviewing video interviews from last year, assisting with operations and logistics of the 80<sup>th</sup> SWCS International Annual Conference, planning a student and early career professional networking session, and more.



**Chloe** is a West Texas A&M University senior majoring in Agricultural Media and Communications. She is a native of southern Iowa. She plans to return to school in the fall to pursue her master's degree in Agricultural Business and Economics. At West Texas A&M, she was a member of the WT Horse Judging Team, an Attebury Honors Scholar, the vice president of the Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow Club, and a charter member of the professional agricultural sorority Sigma Alpha, the Gamma Theta Chapter. She has a passion for the agriculture industry and the people in it.



**Ismael** is a senior at Purdue University working on a degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Science with a concentration in Environmental Quality and Restoration and a certificate in public policy. On campus he does research for the Purdue Agroecology Lab, with a focus on accessible drone applications for agriculture and carbon sequestration policy research. He hopes to go to graduate school to get an MS in Agronomy and influence agriculture policy. He is especially interested in holistic research approaches, soil health principles, project management, and stakeholder engagement. He is president of Purdue's Environmental Science Club, Environmental Project Coordinator with the Starke County Parks and Recreation Department, and he works with the Indiana Organic Network and Arrowhead Country RC&D.

We are grateful to SWCS for this opportunity to support our young conservationists and grow our organizations.

## Mentoring Program Update

As mentioned in our April newsletter, ARCSE intends to continue to make members available for mentoring, career counseling, or any form of support for NRCS employees need to help them get through this difficult period. If you are interested in being a part of this effort, please click on the link for a fillable form for matching mentors with employees: <https://arcse.org/resources/arcse-nrcs-mentoring-program/>,

It may be a while before we receive a request in your state, but we want to be ready should the need arise. You may need to have a Google account to fill out the form. If that is inconvenient for you please contact me and we will work out another option.

—Craig Derickson, Mentoring Team Leader

## ALABAMA

**Earl Norton, ARCSE Representative**

**Email:** [earl\\_norton@yahoo.com](mailto:earl_norton@yahoo.com)



**Meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (L-R): Steve Musser, Vic Payne, Ken Rogers, George Martin, Charles Bush, Earl Norton.**

Local retirees continue to enjoy breakfast at Chappy's Restaurant in Auburn, where they discuss local and global issues and potential solutions.



Meeting on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 (L-R): Mac Nelson, Charles Bush. Earl Norton, Ernest Todd, Steve Musser, Rev. Cliff Jones.

Ambers E. Hanson, age 101, died peacefully in his home in Auburn, Alabama, on June 9, 2025.

## ARKANSAS

**Ralph Mashburn, ARCSE Representative**

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

**Bob Price**, the Arkansas ARCSE Chapter president announced tentative plans for their annual state retirement luncheon to be held Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at the Whole Hog Café, 2516 Cantrell Rd. in Little Rock.

Bob and **Ralph Mashburn** have similar situations taking care of their wives who have both been ill lately. As a result, they are both learning unfamiliar cooking and housekeeping skills.



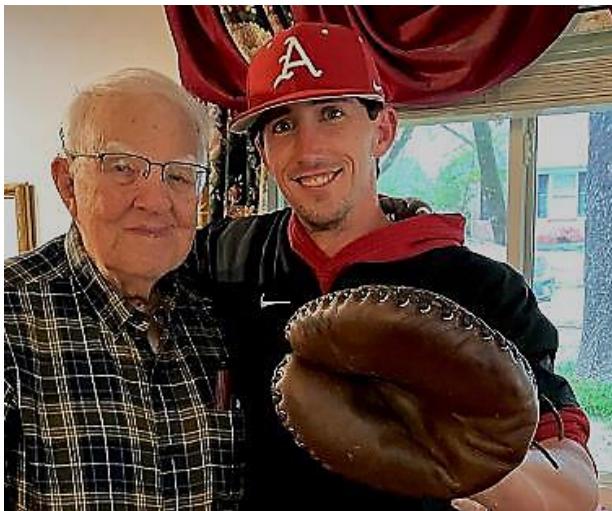
Ralph and **Nancy** Mashburn had a busy spring with family members visiting them in their Senior facility cottage in Little Rock. **Austin Burroughs**, a grandson from New Zealand and his wife, **Ana** came for their annual summer visit. Austin is an Activities Director at a Christian camp in New Zealand and has time off during the winter at that location of the world. Austin and Ana bought Arkansas cowboy hats to take back to New Zealand



Our family gathered in our cottage to celebrate our two grandsons' 30<sup>th</sup> birthdays: **Austin Burroughs** and **Andrew Mashburn**. In the front you can see **Dick and Lori Babeu**, retired SCSE's and long-time family friends.



Andrew is the Texarkana, AR high school baseball coach. Ralph presented him with Ralph's old 1947 catcher's mitt that was used by various players to catch his pitches during American Legion games long, long ago.



It seems that there is always something to repair with Ralph's fishing boat that he keeps at nearby Lake Maumelle. This time the boat trailer needs repair and his son-in-law, **Danny Joe**, is always ready to help as shown below. Ralph is not much help – but he tries to.

## ARIZONA

**Wade Biddix, ARCSE Representative**

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

**Rod Alt** had a very busy travel year and sent in the following: Sally and I flew to Malaga, Spain on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, by way of Paris to visit Sally's daughter **Christine** and son-in-law, **Lance** in Fuengirola, Spain. While we were there, we also saw our grandson **Lance**, his wife **Regina** and our granddaughter **Morgan**. We attended the LIV golf Tournament at Real Club at Valderrama. We went to the bull fights in Seville, Spain. We saw some Flamenco dancing in Malaga. We spent lots of time on the beach in Fuengirola and at the pool at the kid's apartment. We flew home on Friday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, by way of Amsterdam, Atlanta, and finally to Phoenix.

We went to Colorado the last of August to visit my daughter **Terri**, granddaughter **Meagan**, and great granddaughters **Clair** and **Halie**. We celebrated Clair's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Then we visited some friends in Denver before returning home in early September.

Thanksgiving week we went to Middletown, MD to visit Sally's daughter **Alisa** and family for Thanksgiving. On December 19th, we flew to Detroit to spend Christmas with Sally's daughter Christine and family in Rochester, NY.

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, Sally and I flew to San Francisco to attend Sally's granddaughter's wedding. On June 10<sup>th</sup>, I flew to Amarillo, TX to participate in a golf tournament with my son **Rod**.

**Wade Biddix** sent in the following: **Joanne** and I flew to Boston in May to visit our son, daughter-in-law, and 2½ year-old granddaughter. We then flew to Marrakesh, Morocco. We took day tours of the Old Town area, Atlas Mountains, and Essaouira, a coastal town on the Atlantic Ocean.



**Wade and Joanne Biddix on a bike tour in front of the Rock of Gibraltar.**

The highlights were the fresh fish meals and the chicken and vegetable Tagine food. Morocco is still recovering from a devastating earthquake in 2023. Many of the Berber people's rock, mud and straw homes in the Atlas Mountains were totally destroyed. They are rebuilding their homes using concrete blocks and funding from the central government – but progress is slow. From Morocco, we flew to Malaga Spain and stayed at Marriott Vacation Clubs in Marbella and Estepona, which are located along the Mediterranean Sea. We had beautiful weather and took many day excursions, including Flamenco dancers and paella dinner in Marbella, Dolmens, and El Torcal Mountains in Antequera, the mountain city of Mijas, an E-bike tour of the Rock of Gibraltar, the mountain village of Benahavis, the promenade and orchidarium with beautiful flowers in Estepona, the homes built into the rock cliffs in Setenil de Las Bodegas, and the bullfighting ring and beautiful vistas in Ronda.



**Wade and Joanne Biddix with homes built into rock cliffs in Setenil de Las Bodegas, Spain.**

One interesting fact learned from our tour was that Great Britain, during World War II, fortified the Rock of Gibraltar in order to protect the entrance from the Atlantic Ocean into the Mediterranean Sea. They built housing and a hospital inside the rock to provide for 60,000 soldiers and families. They built over 52 miles of roads inside the rock and there are only 26 miles outside the rock in the entire city. Amazing! Luckily, the Germans never invaded that area, and the fortified defenses were never needed. We returned home to Goodyear after stops in London and Boston

## CALIFORNIA

**Bill Ward, ARCSE Representative**

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

Hello to all my fellow retirees all across the country from California! I am excited to share detailed information about a new SCS-NRCS Musicians project that will allow biographies of all participating Musicians from SCS and NRCS to be shared on a new Musicians Link on the ARCSE web site.

As the advertisement, "Wanted Musicians from the SCS and NRCS" shared early in this issue of this newsletter, we are looking for musician's from SCS and NRCS to identify and document biographies of musicians from SCS and NRCS. Here is a little "history" and everything any musician from SCS/NRCS needs to know to be able to take part in this project and have their biographies be shared on the new Musicians Link on the ARCSE Website.

### **SCS/NRCS Musicians Project - Introduction**

A small team of retired SCS/NRCS Musicians has embarked on an effort to identify, write, and share biographies of all interested fellow musicians from SCS and NRCS. Biographies will share information about each individual's life experiences as a musician, their SCS/NRCS career, education, military, and professional experience. Musicians from partnering SCS/NRCS agencies can also take part in this project. These biographies will be available for all SCS/NRCS employees and retirees to view on a brand-new Musicians Link on the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE) website. The SCS/NRCS Musicians Project "Team" want to write biographies from as many musicians from SCS, NRCS and partnering agencies as possible from all across the Country!

*Additional information—"SCS/NRCS Musicians project," its origins, how to access the musician's link, biographies, and how to join.*

**Douglas Toews, CA, Bill Ward, CA and Dennis Clute, TX**—Retired NRCS Engineers and Musicians—are members of the "team" that put together the vision for this project to identify, write, and share musicians' biographies. Following is a direct link to the new Musicians link on the ARCSE web site. **Musicians—ARCSE** (<https://ARCSE/musicians/>). There are three links: "introduction", "biographies," and "how to join."

The introduction includes a forward written by ARCSE President **Julie MacSwain** and an introduction by Douglas Toews. The introduction content by Douglas Toews provides information on the biography content that will be helpful to musicians in completing their "Musician Biography Information" form. The "How to Join" link provides a fillable form, "Musician Biography information," for each musician to fill out. Completed Musician Biography information forms are to be returned to Bill Ward, preferably by email: [BluegrassBillWard@gmail.com](mailto:BluegrassBillWard@gmail.com). Douglas Toews does a final editing process, using the Musician Biography information completed by

each musician. That final editing process results in the final, "concise two column biography format" as shown in the existing ten biographies that the current Musicians link contains. One jpg photo (optional) is recommended with each musician's biography information. Links to a band web page or Facebook page (optional) can also be included with biography information.

**New Biographies Coming Soon.** Four new biographies are being added to the Musicians Link on the ARCSE website. Look for **John Whitney, Diane Petit, Pedro Torres and Clare Nichols.** What a diverse group of musicians have worked for SCS/NRCS!

The SCS/NRCS Musician Project "Team" Members are also encouraging all Musicians taking part in this project to consider membership in ARCSE. First year ARCSE membership is complimentary. Thereafter, annual fees are \$25. Becoming an ARCSE member is a great way to say thank you to the ARCSE Board for supporting this project and making it possible to share SCS/NRCS Musicians Biography formation on ARCSE's new Musicians Link.

Any SCS/NRCS Musicians out there should contact me directly by email, [BluegrassBillWard@gmail.com](mailto:BluegrassBillWard@gmail.com), if you have any questions about any aspect of becoming a member of this very unique group. This is an exciting time for musicians from SCS and NRCS. I look forward to hearing from musicians from SCS and NRCS.

Sincerely,

Bill Ward, PE, Retired NRCS Engineer  
 Western Lights Band Leader  
 CA ARCSE State Representative  
 ARCSE West Region VP  
 For SCS/NRCS Musician Project "Team Members"  
 Douglas Toews, Dennis Clute, Bill Ward

## CONNECTICUT, RHODE ISLAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Carl DuPoldt, ARCSE Representative**

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

**CT:** Bug Week 2025: A Celebration of Insects Across Connecticut <https://publications.extension.uconn.edu/2025/06/11/bug-week-2025-a-celebration-of-insects-across-connecticut/>

DEEP events

<https://www.depdata.ct.gov/calendar/listevs.asp?selecttype=all>

Connecticut's best and worst beaches for water quality -<https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/connecticuts-best-and-worst-beaches-for-water-quality/3053515/>

**NH:** Gives 2025: Help Make This the Best Summer Ever - <https://nhaudubon.org/nh-gives-2025/>

Conservation Commission Upcoming Events - <https://www.derrynh.gov/node/176/events/upcoming>

**NJ:** Welcome to the Home of the Great Bay Stewards! - <https://greatbaystewards.org/>

**RI:** Rhode Island's "troll trail" will expand beyond Ninigret Park. Find out where. - <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/good-news/2025/06/11/danish-artist-building-ri-troll-trail-with-5-massive-sculptures/84112938007/>

Audubon of Rhode Island – July highlights - <https://www.mybackyardnews.com/2025/06/05/audubon-of-rhode-island-4/>

The decline of natural oyster reefs in Rhode Island isn't just bad news for shellfish lovers. Oysters provide ecological benefits, keeping our waters clean. NRCS is working with Ocean State oyster growers to help restore oyster reefs. - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/state-offices/rhode-island/rhode-island-oyster-restoration-initiative#:~:text=The%20decline%20of%20natural%20oyster%20reefs%20in%20Rhode,State%20oyster%20growers%20to%20help%20restore%20oyster%20reefs.>

**VT:** Vermont Center Ecostudies - <https://vtecostudies.org/events/>

16 Epic 2025 Festivals to Celebrate July in Vermont - <https://vermontexplored.com/july-in-vermont/>

Greensboro Conservation Commission - <https://greensborovt.gov/conservation-commission/>

## INDIANA

**Jane Hardisty, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [dirtlady52@aol.com](mailto:dirtlady52@aol.com)



**Indiana Retirees:** (L-R): Becky Fletcher, Cathy Deal, Paula Milligan, Jane Hardisty, Mike Wigginton, Gary Struben, Bill Beard, Bob Eddleman, Michelle Phillips, and Deb Montgomery.

**Becky Fletcher** reported: A few Hoosier retirees and friends met on June 24<sup>th</sup> at our favorite Mexican restaurant. We always feel lucky to have **Bob Eddleman** and **Jane Hardisty** join us.

## IOWA

**Mark Jensen, ARCSE Representative**

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

Thanks to **Larry Beeler** for submitting the following: "On April 7<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup>, my brother **Gary** and I traveled to the Patagonia Area of Chile, South America to hike the popular "W" Trek, located in the Torres Del Paine National Park. The trip was organized by the Above and Beyond Cancer non-profit organization, whose mission is to elevate the mind, body and spirit of patients, survivors and caregivers throughout the cancer journey. (More information at <https://aboveandbeyondcancer.org/about>). A total of 28 people were on the trip.



**Gary and Larry Beeler in Torres Del Paine National Park in Chili – at a scenic overlook**

The "W" trek included five days of hiking and four nights camping in the park covering a distance of approximately 40 miles and an elevation climb of 7,000 feet. Highlights include the Las Torres (the peaks), Grey Glacier, a complex of 47 glaciers which makes up the third largest freshwater reserve in the world, challenging hiking trails and beautiful mountain views."



**Gary and Larry Beeler in Torres Del Paine National Park in Chili – doing some hiking**

**Kurt Hoeft** and **Mark Schutt** recently returned from a fishing trip to Cedar Lake in Canada. Kurt caught a 40-inch musky on a jig and minnow while fishing for walleye. He said that Mark was the key to getting it landed as he netted it on the first try. Kurt also said that "in good retiree fashion, I caught a 23-inch walleye while sleeping in the boat, while crappie fishing."



**Kurt Hoeft with 40 inch Muskie**

**Marty Adkins** sent the following update on their family's busy life. "Carol and I are in Green Bay, on our way to a driving trip around Lake Superior. We just served as producers for our Knoxville Area Community Theater (KACT) production of Steel Magnolias. In small town community theatre, that just means doing what needs to be done to support the directors and cast. I worked on the set and served in the back-stage crew. Carol handled promotion and helped with costumes.

I just finished teaching 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> graders in a summer theatre camp. The kids were sweet, had fun, and maybe even learned a few things. Right now we're gearing up for July auditions for our KACT production of Matilda the Musical. Carol is directing and I'm producing. It should be a busy but fun fall.

One other thing: I might have mentioned before that I have been consulting on a volunteer basis with the Evangelical Environmental Network on soil health and conservation. As part of this, I wrote a blog for their newsletter titled "Christian Vocation and Land Stewardship".

On June 18, the northwest Iowa group of retirees met for breakfast. The donuts were in honor of **Jeri Ducommun**'s 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Happy birthday Jeri! Those attending are shown with the picture.



**Northwest Iowa retirees breakfast group (L-R): Dick Hall, Scott Osborn, Dave Sage, Judy Clause, Terry Skadeland Sage, Jeri Ducommun, and Marla Conley.**

**Eldon Weber** was doing some reminiscing and passed along this story. "When I was the AC at Mason City, back in the early 1960s, I was driving an SCS sedan on the highway headed for the Oelwein Field Office when a highway patrolman, with his red lights on, stopped me. I was shocked as I knew I wasn't speeding! He said, "You are to call the State Office." I knew it had to be an emergency! I was about to Oelwein, so I called when I arrived at the Field Office. **Marge Miller, Wilson Moon**'s (the State Conservationist) Secretary, answered. I said, "I was stopped by a patrolman and told to call the state office!" Marge said, "Oh, I was to let you know the AC meeting will be held at Sioux City next week." I reminded her many times I didn't know I was that important that she used the patrolman to deliver very important messages!"

**Gary Hillmer** and his wife **Jamarie (Jamie) Blanchard** sent us this update on their activities. In retirement, Gary has been able to spend more time on his vegetable and pollinator gardens. He grows a variety of vegetables and is providing good pollinator habitat. Gary said they enjoy camping with friends who like to pedal, so they look to stay at campgrounds that are on or near bike trails. After 17 years of riding a recumbent trike, he upgraded to an e-assist trike this year. All the better to stay active, get out, and see more sights! (The electric assist only works if you're pedaling; there's no throttle.)



*Gary Hillmer and wife Jamie Blanchard*



*Gary Hillmer's Pollinator Garden*

Last fall **Jamie and Gary** celebrated 10 years of marriage with a five-week road trip out west with stops at Devils Tower and Glacier National Park before visiting family at Anacortes. After spending a couple weeks in Washington, they traveled through Oregon and along the California coast, making their way to Guerneville to spend a week with some of their "biking tribe," celebrating 60<sup>th</sup> birthdays. They will soon be embarking on a three-week Colorado biking and camping adventure.

Jamie said their ninth grandchild will be born in July. The oldest grandkid will turn six in September. She said that's "A LOT of littles!"



*Gary, Jamie, and their 8 grandkids*



*Gary Hillmer on his trike*

**Mark McCurdy** retired at the first of the year. On April 25<sup>th</sup>, he hosted a retirement open house at the All Saints Catholic Church in Des Moines. There was a good turnout of both current employees and retirees. It was a fun evening of visiting and eating! Following are the names of retirees who attended: **Kathy Woida, Lee and Alice White, Mark Jensen, Don Peterson, Marvin Brown, Sue Cross, Roger and Donita Link, Dave Brommel, Larry Beeler, Dale DuVal, Dave and Ting Beck, Ted Oswald, Tom Oswald, Jeff Godwin, Alan Lauver, and Kevin and Robin Holcomb.**



Mark McCurdy and daughter Emily



Mark's retirement cake (minus one slice!)



Visiting and Eating at Mark's Retirement Open House



***More Visiting and Eating at Mark's Retirement Open House***

On May 10, **Ann** and I (**Mark Jensen**) celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We celebrated by taking a family vacation in June to Emerald Isle in North Carolina. We rented a house facing the ocean, so we had plenty of opportunities for photos and playing on the beach. In addition to spending time on the beach we did several other interesting events like touring Fort Macon; taking the ferry to Shackleford Banks Island to see the wild horses; hiking at a couple of state parks; eating local food specialties like seafood boil pots; fishing at the pier; etc. It was a great week being with our kids and grandsons. Our youngest grandson, **Clyde**, rode with us on the trip to and from North Carolina. The three of us made some fun stops in transit. A couple of those highlights were the Smoky Mountains and Mammoth Cave National Park.



***Ann and Mark Jensen at Emerald Isle***



*Our Family On the deck by the beach*



*Grandson Oliver on a Boogie Board*



*Shackleford Banks wild horses in the background*



*Posing by a cannon at Fort Macon*



*Clyde and Mark on Mammoth Cave Tour*

Over the past several months, several people have joined our retiree community. These include **Lynn Crosby**, Resource Conservationist in Ottumwa; **Terry Gleaves**, District Conservationist in Oakland; **Larry Stevens**, District Conservationist in Sigourney; **Mark McCurdy**, Civil Engineer in Des Moines; **Teresa Steffens**, Administrative Support Specialist in the West Union Area Office; and **Barbara Schuster**, Program Assistant in Epworth.

During the past couple of months, we have been saddened by the passing of **Julé Carrington**, the wife of **Don Carrington**. Don was a Soil Conservationist in the State Office. We also lost **Don Ummel**, a former State Administrative Officer in Iowa. Their obituaries are in the In-Memoriam section of the newsletter.

## MAINE

**Mary Thompson, ARCSE Representative [NEW]**

Email: [mpthom@roadrunner.com](mailto:mpthom@roadrunner.com)

*The following is from **Mary Thompson**, a new ARCSE Member and Representative. John Simon had worked as the ARCSE Representative for years. He passed away recently. See the In Memoriam section for more details.*

This is my first stab at writing for the newsletter due to the passing of our long-time correspondent, **John Simon**. He asked if I would take on this role for our group, how could I say no? SCS/ NRCS was a wonderful way of life for our family.

This past winter and spring we lost three retirees; all worked in the engineering aspects of conservation. **Lew Crosby** was a hydraulic engineer, worked mostly on Flood Insurance Studies; **Joe Bertolaccini**, worked in Watershed and Flood Insurance Studies and John Simon was a Field Engineer and enjoyed designing ponds and manure storages. Over the last two- or three-monthly breakfasts stories have been told of their contributions. Our last monthly meeting was to be a picnic, but we needed to change the location to **Art Taylor's** garage because of the relentless rainstorms we have had this spring. There were five retirees. **Art Taylor, Dan Baumert and Brian Stuart** have raced whitewater in canoes or kayaks. Art showed us his wall of awards. **Susan Arrants** and I caught up with activities and Weston, our grandson, enjoyed playing with his Hot Wheel cars. Art, thanks for a nice gathering.

Recently a father and daughter died climbing Maine's famed Mount Katahdin. In August of 1987 a few of us climbed Mount Katahdin. Attached is a photo that I took at the top. It was always curious that **Lew Crosby** stood on the top in his tee shirt and shorts, and the rest of us were bundled up. There were many others on "top of the world" that day. We went up the Abol Trail and down the Hunt Trail.

Until next time, Yours in Conservation,

—Mary Thompson



**Bottom: Mike Thompson and Art Taylor. Top: Carla Halbrom, Lew Crosby and Rob Halbrom.**

Our next gathering will be on Tuesday June 10<sup>th</sup> at the park near Eastern Maine Medical, now known as Northern Light Health. I believe the name of the park is Crescent Park. We will meet at noon. Come when you can. If raining, we will let you know of our plans. It is a picnic so bring your favorite picnic lunch. **Chris and Ricky** took our group photos and Weston took a couple of his own. Enjoy the coming of spring!



We recently lost **Lewis Crosby** and **John Simon**. More information can be found in the In Memoriam section.

## MICHIGAN

**William Fude, ARCSE Representative**

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

The annual Upper Peninsula NRCS Retiree Lunch was held at the Up North Lodge in Gwinn, Michigan on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025. **Bobbie Hartman** did her usual great job of organizing the lunch. Joining Bobbie were **Mike LaPointe; Bill and Betty Perkis, Bernie and Dianne Huetter, Walt and Phyllis Summers, Tom and Barb Tauzer, Larry and Sharon Carey; and Bryan and Techla Hill**. A good time was had by all!

## MIDATLANTIC STATES

**Terry D'Addio, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [tmdaddio@aol.com](mailto:tmdaddio@aol.com)



**Virginia ARCSE Breakfast group at the WOW Diner, May 6. L-R, Back row: Dave Thackeray and Paul Benedict. L-R, Front row: John Peterson, Bill Irwin, Ron Marlow, and John Moore. Jerry Bernard took the photograph.**

From **John Peterson**: "This May we had another exciting adventure. On May 8<sup>th</sup> I was watching the Capitals in the hockey playoffs, and **Blanche** was baking a sweet potato in the oven. She shouted, "we have a fire in the oven." Sure enough, the coil in the bottom of the oven was burning—in an electric stove no less. I got the fire extinguisher and tried putting it out.

At first it didn't appear the extinguisher was having any effect. Blanche called the fire department. By the time they arrived I had the fire out, but they came with 8 vehicles and 16+ fire fighters, and 2 Battalion Chiefs. They made more of a mess than the fire did. They went through all the house and opened the windows. They set up some big fans and blew the smoke and soot out as best they could. Interestingly the stove fire ruined the stove, but did not damage the house at all, except for the soot and smoke throughout.

We now have a new stove, the kitchen and living rooms have been cleaned up, and the cleaning company starts on the rest of the house tomorrow. Thank goodness for insurance. The cleanup bill is \$40,000 and all we will pay is our deductible. I know I am getting old, but I was not prepared for the cleanup cost estimate. Darn expensive sweet potato." —John.

### ***The history of U-Pick farm produce in the US, and John R. Peterson's involvement in it.***

**John Peterson** reports:

**U-Pick farms.** Since my Grandfather **John Richard Peterson** owned a cherry orchard, Peterson's Eagle Orchard, near Ephraim in Door County, WI, and always reserved some trees near the house for people who would pick their own cherries, I was interested in the history of U-Pick farms in my spouses (**E. Blanche Peterson**) April-May 2024 Country Living Magazine. I will copy the article and then relate it to the orchard and my Grandfather Peterson's management of it.

"A brief History of U-Pick Farms. Post-WWI, a perfect storm of declining birth rates, ballooning debts, and dwindling need for US agricultural products abroad left farmers desperate to sell surplus produce. At the same time city dwellers were eager to hit the freshly paved roads that newly connected urban centers to the countryside. During the particularly bountiful 1932 cherry season in Door County, Wisconsin, area farmers arrived at an ingenious idea; turn the hard labor of fruit picking into leisure activity. Vacationers were heavily encouraged to detour to nearby farms for an afternoon of fruit-focused fun. The coordinated efforts of the Door County cherry farmers paved the way for similar U-Pick experiences across the U.S."

I have no doubt now that Grandfather Peterson was one of those cherry farmers who helped start the U-Pick idea. I was born in 1936 and from the time I can remember our school teaching (but always with a small farm) family would travel to Ephraim every summer to help during the cherry picking season from late June, July, and mid-August. In all those years my father would talk about growing up on the orchard and would mention how Grandfather reserved some trees near the house for people to pick their own cherries. The commercial orchard was not big, only about 40 acres on the commercial side and 6 acres of homestead.

Peterson's Eagle Orchard was ahead of its time embracing the U-Pick concept. Grandfather Peterson not only reserved trees for family picking but cultivated an atmosphere of community and leisure. Families would arrive with baskets and blankets, transforming cherry-picking into a cherished outing rather than mere labor. His foresight mirrored the broader trend described in the article, where the balance between agriculture and recreation helped farmers weather tough times. The orchard became a destination not just for cherries but also for shared memories and a deepened connection to the land.

The orchard and homestead were not large, only 46 acres as I remember. And the homestead took about 6 acres of that. The commercial part of the orchard which ran East of the homestead was about 1300 feet deep. The homestead area had 6 trees for families to pick from. I think four were the tart red Montmorency cherries for pies and things (representing 80% of Door County cherry production), and two were sweet Bing



Cheery trees, the purple cherries for eating. The homestead area also contained a large barn where the farm machinery was kept on the ground floor, and the upper floor was set up like an army barracks with sleeping and bath quarters for about 25 single male pickers. There were also two modest family homes that would accommodate two families each.

I was fascinated by Grandfather's farm machinery in the barn. While my parents helped with the harvest every summer, and Tom and I always went with them, I probably started noticing things when I was about 5 in 1941. By the time we boys were about 8 we were helping in the orchard. Early on it was with menial tasks and as we got older, we would also pick and drive the farm equipment. In the early days Grandfather Peterson used a huge Fordson steel-wheeled tractor. Over time it was hard to get that big tractor down the rows of trees. He was delighted when Ford came out with the small, squat blue/gray Ford tractor with the wide front wheels. They made it easy to get all kinds of machinery down the rows. I never saw the big Fordson operated. I saw it in the barn where Grandfather kept it. Sprayers and other equipment was also stored in the barn.

Grandfather Peterson had quite a range of cherry pickers in my memory. In my first years we had German prisoners-of-war (POW's). They were excellent pickers, good people, and some became my father's personal friends even after they went home after the war. They did not stay at the orchard. Early every weekday morning they would come in 2 army buses, each with an armed guard. They would pick cherries all day and then go back to the prison camp in the evening. They were paid a small sum per pail picked. The Army would bring their noon lunch (called dinner in the Midwest. Supper was the evening meal.) to them. But every day, Grandfather Peterson would have 8 of them eat the noon dinner meal with our family. That was a treat for them as my mother **Gertrude, Aunt Amy Peterson** (Amy retired as a professor at Miami U in Ohio and was the second of the Peterson children, **Eric, Amy**, and my father **John**), and another woman prepared huge, excellent dinner meals. Grandfather Peterson's praying before we ate became a story. He was a Baptist and before we ate, he would close his eyes and start praying. He went on forever it seemed. The women had to try and keep the food warm until he finished. The POW's would joke about it. By the time the picking season was over I think we had all the POW's eat with us at noon at least twice. No POW ever tried to escape, and the guards usually stacked their rifles under a tree and went to sleep during the day, not good guard form, but they trusted the POW's.

After WWII ended and the POW's either went home or stayed here, which some did, he had Jamaican pickers for only one year. They were good pickers, but Grandfather had to break up knife fights between some Jamaican pickers in the orchard. One year was enough of that. Then for many years we had a Mexican family from Texas who came with their crew. They would have 20-25 single young men pickers who would stay in the barn barracks. There were usually 4 large families who stayed in the 2 houses. The women in those families would prepare the meals for their entire crew. Some young women and boys in the families would join the pickers. We had these Texas crews for many years, and they were outstanding as people and workers.

Every year Grandfather had a planned method of managing the picking. The pickers would always start on the East end of the orchard where the cherries ripened first, and move Westerly toward the house as the season went on. I suspect that had something to do with the time the trees would be at peak production. He probably had different varieties so they would not all ripen at once. The pickers would put the picked cherries in pails. Every picker had their own card showing the number of pails picked. And that is how they were paid, by the pail. Each time they would bring full pails to a check-in station, the card would be punched showing the number of pails delivered. They did that many times each day, bringing in 10-12 pails at a time. Grandfather would pay the person who he contracted with for the picking every Friday, and that person would then pay the individual pickers. I suspect that was done with cash, but do not know that.

When the picking was going on in a part of the orchard there always was a close check-in station. At the station there was a big wagon full of empty cherry crates. As the pails came in and were counted, the pails were dumped in the empty crates. Sorters would then go through each crate, pulling out stems and damaged cherries. When the crates on a wagon were all filled, and that meant hundreds of crates stacked high, the wagon would be pulled to a large truck where the crates would be loaded. Then the truck, driven by Grandfather always smoking a huge cigar, would take them to the canning factory cooperative in Sturgeon Bay. It was always a treat for one of us grandchildren to go with Grandfather on that trip and smell the cigar smoke. That truck could make more than one trip a day. That trip was 40 miles each way.

I need to describe the wagons used at the check-in stations to collect the cherries at the picking locations. In my later years they were regular large 20' wagons with wheels pulled by a tractor. But in my earlier days they were stone-bolts pulled by mules or horses. A stone-bolt was 2 twenty-foot long, 2-foot diameter logs, placed about 8 feet apart, with 2 x 4's nailed across them to form a wagon bed. The 2 x 4's were spaced about 3" apart. When we had POW's picking, my brother Tom was standing on a stone-bolt when the mules started moving. His foot slipped between the 2 x 4's and he was in danger of having a badly damaged leg. A German POW, **Helmut Lecuer**, saw what was happening and stopped the mules. Tom was not hurt. My father and that POW, who went back to Germany after the war, communicated for years until we learned from his family that Helmut passed away.

I thought this part of our Peterson family history should be available to those that may not know of it. Until Blanche's Country Living article I had no way to connect those dots myself. But the location and timing fit perfectly. By the way, Grandfather Peterson's wife, **Anna D. Anderson Peterson** (1877-1932) was killed after being hit by a car walking on the road near their home on Christmas Eve. I never knew her. Grandfather Peterson's (1873-1950) passing caused the Orchard to be sold. I wish we could have kept it in the family. The picture at the top of this story is of one of the Peterson's Eagle Orchard T shirts the family wore during picking time. This one dates to about 1945. **Blanche Peterson** framed this one and it hangs in our kitchen. All families have their stories. Since this one relates to an idea and activity that spread across the entire US, it is special to our Peterson family and worth saving.

**John W. Peterson, JR. Burke, VA, JUN 2025. Blanche and my 66<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.**

**DEADLINE FOR THE SEPT/OCT 2025 NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS IS AUGUST 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2025.**

## MISSOURI

**Dave Rastorfer, ARCSE Representative**

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

The Columbia area retirees met for their quarterly breakfast on May 14<sup>th</sup> at JJ's restaurant in Columbia. Those in attendance were **Frank Gordon, Bob Hummel, Gail Sallee, Bob Ball, Larry and Bonnie Pollard, Marilyn Gann, David Gruber, Dennis Hoffman, Jean Herman, Gena Michalson and Dave Rastorfer**. The next quarterly breakfast will be on Wednesday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at JJ's restaurant in Columbia (site of the old Country Kitchen). Everyone is invited!

**Jim Sturm:** Princeton, MO: Been quite busy since the end of February/2025 at the Mercer County Senior Center. The Administrator resigned, and I have been filling in until the new Admin. starts in July/2025. Once in a while, one of the dine-in clients will ask if I get paid, and I tell them that it's quite nice—a cookie from the kitchen now and then. Otherwise, laid down about 220 cubic feet of Cypress mulch with recycled newspaper underneath the mulch for weed control around my house this spring. Preparing for some foot surgery during the latter part of August/2025. Will be unable to drive vehicles for two months. Plan on recuperating at the local nursing home for the 1<sup>st</sup> month after surgery. Have a good one, you all!

**Jim Rickman:** We only planted four tomatoes, and one was not labeled correctly. These have been the healthiest tomatoes we have grown in Texas. Three early girls and one mystery. I average four ripe tomatoes each day. Delicious! Going to Alaska next week for 12 days—part mission trip, but mostly a fishing trip. Enjoying a cooler than usual spring and summer, and we have had more than our share of rain. Lots of things to be grateful for, but the main one is our health.

**Mike Blaine:** Things are very warm in NEMO. The week I am writing this will be in the 90s every day. We got a rain last week that really helped the garden. Corn and beans looking good. And my Rhubarb is still producing well. We cut our first cutting of grass hay on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June. It produced very well. Still got 85 more acres to cut. Hope all is well with everyone. I'll see many of you in September at the retiree's lunch.

Recent retirees: **Dennis Speichinger, Warren Cork, Ryan Peck, Scott Siegfried, and Melissa Smith.**

## MONTANA

**Lori Valadez, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [valadez226@gmail.com](mailto:valadez226@gmail.com)**

From Mary Ann Gooby:

June 17th, 2025: Last chapter of the **Gooby Ranch Reports**

We sold all our cattle. I thought that would provide more time for **Mary Ann** to take care of me. Since we have no more delicious Gooby beef, Mary Ann had to plant a garden three times as large as before in order to feed us for a year. I guess we have become vegetarians.

Not only was the garden a lot more work for Mary Ann, but she also had to borrow some fence posts from the neighbor's fence to build a new fence to keep the horses out.

Despite all the hard work in the garden, Mary Ann still finds time to turn on the TV and bring me a beer. We really are enjoying our Golden Years together.



**Time and Motion study—Mary Ann and Dick Gooby**

ARCSE talents abound! **Julie MacSwain** penned the following "Gooby Ranch Reflections:"

### A TRIBUTE TO DICK & MARY ANN GOODY

He wrangled the cattle, or so he'd say,  
Mostly by pointing, then staying away,  
With a chore coat on and a grin just right,  
Dick made "supervision" look real bright.

But behind the scenes and out in front,  
Mary Ann handled every stunt.  
She ran the ranch with style and grace,  
While Dick told stories all over the place.

Together they built a life so grand -  
A legendary duo across the land.

## NEBRASKA

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

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### First Friday of the Month NRCS/SCS Retirees Breakfast Club

There was great attendance at our May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 8am breakfast at Stacey Hy-Vee. Present were **Steve Scheinost, Bill Best, Mike Kucera, Ken Noonan, Dave Griffith, Dennis Schroeder, Jim Culver, Harold Klaege, Ed Chmelka, Eric Hadenfildt, Doug Christensen, Craig Derickson, Jim Harder, and Jim Welch.**

Attending our June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025 breakfast were **Harold Klaege, Steve Scheinost, Dennis Schroeder, Dave Griffith, Ed Chmelka, Crag Derickson, Bill Best, Steve Chick, Pat McGrane, Doug Christensen, Mark Willoughby, and Jim Culver.**

Informational reports from **Harold Klaege, Craig Derickson and Doug Christensen** were most helpful in keeping up on current national NARFE and USDA-NRCS re-organizational concerns. Some tough decisions for many current employees.



*Our June meeting. Left – Right: Jim Harder, Steve Chick, Steve Scheinost, Dennis Schroeder, Dave Griffith, Doug Christensen, Pat McGrane, Harold Klaege, Bill Best, Ed Chmelka, and Craig Derickson.*

Congratulations to **Mark Willoughby**. He announced that he is now a new member of the ARCSE. Mark is a retired Soil Scientist living in Beatrice, NE. He has worked at numbers of locations in Nebraska over the years, along with a detail to Palmer, Alaska. As a volunteer he has been very active the past few years in being a lead person in assisting with High School Land Judging Contests in eastern Nebraska.



*Left – Jim Harder our coordinator and others waiting for their food orders to arrive.*



*Steve Chick and his sons enjoyed an excellent recent fishing trip to Lac Seul Lake in Canada. Fishing was outstanding and a great time had by all. L-R: Ben, Brayden, Adam, and Steve*



**Adam Chick holding one of the excellent Pike caught during the great Father and Sons Canada fishing trip.**



**Lincoln Retirees' June breakfast:** Doug Christensen, our chairperson standing in the fore front and Craig Derickson who writes "Notes From the Potomac" for our bi-monthly ARCSE Newsletter standing in the back lead a very productive discussion about projections and rumors of new changes, USDA concerns, and personnel activities.



**Steve Chick and his son, Adam—winners of bass fishing tournament, Walnut Creek Lake, NE**



**Dave Camper, one of our frequent attending members of the Lincoln NRCS Retirees Club, often enjoys motorcycle trips with others to various towns and other places of interest in the general Lincoln vicinity. Dave is meeting up with a breakfast ride to Mel's Dinner in nearby Fremont, NE.**

Congratulations to **Steve Chick** and his son **Adam** for winning the recent Bass Fishing tournament at Walnut Creek Lake located in the Omaha NE area. Steve was avid and very successful in fishing bass tournaments in Texas where he lived for a good number of years. Steve recently moved to Papillion in the western Omaha area. He continues to fish bass tournaments. Steve and Adam

were the winners of the 30-boat tournament. Steve also caught the largest bass during the tournament. So now the Nebraska bass fishing guys will be on the lookout for the super bass fisherman from Texas. We're sure that both Steve and his son Adam will be up to the challenge and task of making their presence known in future local bass tournaments.

The May 21<sup>st</sup> meeting was called to order by Chairperson **Doug Christensen**. Attending were

**Richard Bolli, Dave Camper, Gary Muckel, Harold Klaege, Larry Brown, Bob Engel, Doug Christensen, Craig Derickson, Jim Culver, Norman Helzer, Steve Stover, Dana Snyder, Gus Dornbusch, Thomas Reinsch, JoAnne Thiele, and Donna Dornbusch.**

Doug Christensen talked to Michael Kucera whose wife Karen passed away on May 18<sup>th</sup>. A sympathy card for Michael and his family was signed by all present and will be sent to him. The funeral was on Friday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, at St. John the Apostle Catholic Church.

**Dana Snyder** and his wife will celebrate their 52<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary in May. **Dave Camper** went on a short trip to Ohio to visit relatives. **JoAnne Thiele** went to a relative's funeral 25 years ago. In visiting with other relatives, they decided to meet for lunch at least once a year and have done so since then. She encouraged others to keep in touch with relatives.

**Tom Reinsch** and wife travel several times a year to Arizona to see their children and grandchildren. This year they went to celebrate their daughter's birthday. **Jim Culver**'s granddaughter graduated from Auburn University with a doctorate degree. **Steve Stover**'s grandson graduated from Purdue with a doctorate degree in pharmacy, and his granddaughter graduated from Ohio State University with a bachelor degree in health science and rehabilitation. She will attend Boston University for her master's degree.

A SWCS meeting will be held June 24–26 in Wahoo. Craig Derickson said that Nebraska will receive an outstanding award at that time.

As a representative of NARFE, **Harold Klaege** will attend a National Association of Rural Mail Carriers (NARMC) meeting on June 7<sup>th</sup> to meet with rural mail carriers. He will also take part in a teleconference on June 11<sup>th</sup> with Nebraska's congressional representatives.

Doug Christensen has been invited to be on a Lincoln advisory committee to advise on flooding issues in Lincoln.

Meeting adjourned, **Donna Dornbusch**, Secretary

## NEW JERSEY

**Nancy Paolini, ARCSE Representative**

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

On Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025 several retirees, as well as many active employees, met at Brick House Tavern in Princeton, NJ to honor newly-retired **Gail Bartok**. Over 30 people attended this fun after-hours event. The photos below are only the retirees present: **Barbara Phillips, Nancy Paolini, Doug Kauffman, Gail Bartok, Linda Peterson, Tim Dunne, and Shirley Sakos**.



Shown separately below are **Gail Bartok** and **Maria Iannuzzelli**, recent retiree and new member.



## NEW YORK

**Nancy Lee, ARCSE Representative**

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

The NRCS/SCS Retirees' Picnic will be held on Wednesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025, from 10 – 3 at the Town of Sullivan Chapman Park located on Oneida Lake, Madison County. Grills will be available. Please bring your luncheon meat of choice, beverage, place settings, and a dish to pass.

The STC will give a brief presentation on the happenings with NRCS under the new administration. This will also be the first picnic without our good friend, **Greg Currier**, who lost his battle with lung cancer this winter. Please join us!

## NORTH CAROLINA

**James Canterbury, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [jhcanter@bellsouth.net](mailto:jhcanter@bellsouth.net)**

**Chris Smith**, retired Civil Engineering Technician, Goldsboro, NC was honored recently by the Grantham Grange for 50 years of service to Eastern NC Farmers. On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Grantham Grange #968 in Wayne County, North Carolina, hosted its 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Service Awards Presentation Banquet, where Chris Smith, retired NRCS Civil Engineering Technician, was awarded the Dedicated Service Award for his extraordinary 50 years of service to Eastern North Carolina farmers. Since retiring from NRCS in 2011, he has continued part-time with the Agricultural Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC), providing expertise to enhance farm stewardship. The Grange is a national organization which focuses its efforts on community service, with special emphasis on family values, agriculture, legislature, and other issues that affect rural America.

The event, graced by National Grange President **Christine Hamp** and State Grange President **Jimmy Gentry**, celebrated community leaders whose work also reflects the conservation mission of the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE). The Master of Ceremonies, **Jimmy Martin**, made the following comments when presenting Chris the Dedicated Service Award.

"Tonight, we honor a man whose dedication to the land and the people who work it has left an indelible mark on Eastern North Carolina. It is our great privilege to honor **Chris Smith** with a special award for over 50 years of service to farmers and conservation—a surprise he doesn't see coming, but one he richly deserves."

Chris began his journey in September 1974 with the USDA - Soil Conservation Service at the Lillington Field Office in Harnett County. From day one, he rolled up his sleeves, working hand in hand with the SCS and the local Soil and Water Conservation District to help farmers protect their soil and water. His passion for conservation was evident as he designed and installed practices to prevent erosion and safeguard the environment.

In 1980, Chris took his talents to the Smithfield Field Office in Johnston County as a Soil Conservation Technician. For 20 years at that location, he brought to life practices like grassed waterways, grade stabilization structures, terraces, diversions, swine waste treatment lagoons, poultry waste storage facilities, and even farm ponds—which he loved for their beauty on the landscape—all while ensuring that the land thrived.

Chris was a steady hand for hundreds of farmers in Johnston County, guiding them through the complexities of the 1985 Farm Bill, known as the Food Security Act. He tailored conservation plans to address conservation compliance requirements on highly erodible land and wetlands for farmers participating in USDA programs. Chris assisted these farmers to come into compliance with the design and installation of the planned conservation practices through State and federal cost share programs that provided much needed financial assistance.

When Hurricanes Fran in 1996 and Floyd in 1999 struck, Chris stepped up as a construction inspector, under the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection program, by overseeing stream debris removal to help communities in Johnston County recover from the natural disasters. His work with the farmers and communities in Johnston County earned him numerous awards, a testament to his skill and commitment.

In 2000, Chris earned a well-deserved promotion to Civil Engineering Technician at the Goldsboro Area Office of the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, serving a 40-county region. Until his retirement in 2011, he shared his expertise with countless farmers, leaving a legacy of healthier land across Eastern North Carolina. The Johnston County Soil and Water Conservation District was so inspired by his continued service after moving on from Johnston County, that they honored him with an award at their annual banquet upon his retirement from NRCS—a rare and fitting tribute.

But Chris wasn't done. Even after retiring, he continues part-time work, assisting farmers with the same dedication that defined his career. Over the decades, he's collected many achievement awards, each one a marker of his excellence. This evening, the Grange proudly adds to that collection. Chris Smith, for over 50 years of tireless service, for your unwavering support of our farmers, and for your love of the land, we present you with this award. Please join me in a round of applause for a true champion of Eastern North Carolina agriculture!"

***The preceding was provided by Dean Bingham, PE, Chris Smith's NRCS Supervisor from 2000 to 2011.***



**Chris Smith (right) accepts the Dedicated Service Award from Grantham Grange President John M. Crawford at the Grantham Grange Banquet, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025**



**Chris Smith with his wife Jessie, son William, brothers, and their families, sharing pride and joy at the Grantham Grange awards event.**



**NORTH CAROLINA SCS/NRCS RETIREES' PICNIC, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025.**

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, twenty-seven NRCS North Carolina retirees, spouses, and guests gathered for their annual picnic at Lake Crabtree near Raleigh, NC. **Tim Beard**, State Conservationist, shared with the group the many changes taking place within the agency.

Attending the picnic were **Jim and Becki Canterbury**, **Albert Coffey**, **Tommy Cutts**, **Ray and Debra Dorsett**, **Frank and Loretta Evans**, **Dick and Carol Gallo**. Also attending were **Hank Henry**, **Robert Horton**, **Mike and MaryAnn Jones**, **Joe Kenyon**, **Mason Kenyon**, **Claude and Ruby Long**, **Duncan McGregor**, **Horace Smith**, **Wilson Spencer**, **Mike and Kay Sugg**, **Sam and Pam Warren** and **Greg Walker**.

## OKLAHOMA

**Randy Freeland, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [freelandrandy50@gmail.com](mailto:freelandrandy50@gmail.com)**

The Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees met at the Golden Corral Buffet Restaurant in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Twenty-three people were in attendance (19 retirees and 4 guests/spouses). They were **Don Bartolina**, **Laurie Bogle**, **Larry Caldwell**, **Larry Coppock**, **Wayne Fjeseth**, **Fred Fortney**, **Bonnie and Randy Freeland**, **Sandra and Terry Hough**, **Nick Lambeth**, **Mark Maples**, **Janell and Paul May**, **Kevin Norton**, **Phil Perryman**, **Greg Ritzman**, **Dan Runnels**, **Kirk Schreiner**, **Terry and Jim Smith**, **Ed Stinchcomb**, and **Jamey Wood**.

President **Ed Stinchcomb** called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. **Kevin Norton** provided the blessing for the meal.

**Sandra Hough** reported that she mailed 63 notices concerning today's meeting and four were returned. Randy indicated he now has 174 on his email group notifying members of upcoming meetings, etc.



Don Bartolina, Terry Hough, and Sandra Hough

**Mark Maples** was introduced as a first-time attendee. He retired as the District Conservationist in Okemah in 2019. He started his career in Okemah as a soil conservationist and ended his career in Okemah 37+ years later. His dad, **Robert Maples**, also had a 38-year career with SCS/NRCS retiring in 1988 as District Conservationist at Chandler. Mark volunteers on the Bearden School Board, Rural Water District Board, and a fire department for 27 years. **Paul May** and wife **Janell** were also in attendance. Paul had been to a meeting previously about 10 years ago with **Dale Bell**. They live in Durant where he retired as District Conservationist with 30 years of service. He started his career in Cheyenne. **Nick Lambeth**, **Don Bartolina**, **Fred Fortney**, and **Sandra Hough**, were mentioned more than once, all positive.



Nick Lambeth and Terry Smith



Paul and Janell May

Secretary-Treasurer **Sandra Hough** read the list of those retiring since October 2024:

**Saska Koch**, Area Administrative Coordinator, Clinton, retired 12/27/2024 with 20 yrs service; **Shelley Oliphant**, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Offices, West Zone, retired 12/28/2024 with 37 yrs service; **Delfino (Dino) Rodriguez**, Resource Conservationist, Boise City, retired 11/15/2024 with 14 yrs service; **Larry Hood**, Soil Conservationist, Purcell and El Reno Field Offices, retired April 2025 with 20+ yrs service; **Steve Glasgow**, State Resource Conservationist, Stillwater, retired April 2025 with 37 yrs service and **Connie Fitzpatrick**, Executive Assistant to the State Conservationist, Stillwater, retired April 2025.

Sandra also read the list of known retirees who have passed since October 2024: **Darwin Hedges**, 89, Range Conservationist in southern third of Oklahoma and served as State Range Conservationist in Arkansas, retired in 1986 with 31 yrs service, passed 7/13/2024; **Preston Green**, 86, Soil Conservation Technician, Wilburton, 35 yrs service, passed 9/30/2024; **Jerry Pullen**, 90, Civil Engineering Technician in Watersheds, Davis, passed 11/14/2024; **Jimmy Hill**, 85, Deputy State Conservationist, Stillwater, 30+ yrs service, passed 12/6/2024; **Anthony Lawrence**, 64, Checotah, Soil Conservationist, retired in 2011 with 23 yrs service, passed 1/19/2025; **William Alvin Trissell**, 90, retired DC, Vinita, retired 3/2002, passed 1/21/2025; **Melvin Heath**, longtime Grady County CD Board Member, passed in February 2025; **Carolyn Cail**, wife of retiree **Charlie Cail**, passed 2/3/2025. A moment of silence was observed in their memory.

**Randy Freeland** asked the new retirees in attendance to complete an information sheet and other retirees to provide their retirement activities (i.e., volunteer work, travel, part-time work, activities, etc.). This information is used for the Oklahoma Retired SCS/NRCS Employees Association Newsletter. Many retirees have expressed their appreciation for the information presented on the website [www.joepad.com](http://www.joepad.com). When they are not able to attend the meetings, the website provides pictures, lists of attendees, minutes, newsletters, etc. Thanks to **Joe Freeland** for keeping it current.

**Larry Caldwell** invited everyone to attend "A Celebration of the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Soil Conservation Service" on Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in El Reno at the Canadian County Expo Center from 1am to 3pm. RSVPs are very much appreciated. This special gathering will honor current employees of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as well as retirees from the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and NRCS. This event will celebrate the agency's remarkable accomplishments over the past nine decades and highlight the continuing positive impact NRCS has on Oklahoma's landscape and communities.

This is the last of three events. Two events have already taken place: Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> at the Harn Homestead in Oklahoma City celebrating "The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Black Sunday and Creation of the Soil Conservation Service" and Tuesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> in Guymon "Remembering Black Sunday: 90 Years of Conservation in the Panhandle". These were very well attended. Larry serves as Secretary-Treasurer of the Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society. The nine-member board of directors headed by **Ben Pollard**, President, along with the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and many others inside and outside of this society, planned three events in a two-week period in April to celebrate Black Sunday (April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1935) and the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service (April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1935).



**Kevin Norton, Wayne Fjeseth, Ed Stinchcomb, and Larry Caldwell**

**Randy Freeland** shared with the group replies he received to the email announcing this meeting. One he received was from **Ben Pollard**, President of the Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society (OCHS). He regretted missing our meeting but wanted to meet with his high school classmates on this date. Please remember the OCHS website. Oral histories which were gathered can be accessed at: <https://library.okstate.edu/digital/>. Several conservationists who have provided oral histories are now deceased emphasizing the need to obtain as many as possible before it is too late. The photos may be accessed at: <http://gateway.okhistory.org/explore/collections/OKCHS>.

The website can be accessed at:

<https://www.oklahomaconservationhistory.org>.

News concerning some of our retirees: **Roland Willis** passed a few years ago but we have become aware that his property—including home, mobile homes, equipment sheds, etc.—were destroyed during the recent fires in Stillwater. Roland's wife **June** resides in Primrose Retirement Center in Stillwater, but both daughters were living on the property in mobile homes, which were destroyed. **Steve Alspaugh** and wife **Joy** also lost their home in the Stillwater fires. Note: **Barbara** and **Les Conner** assisted the Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief with clean-up in the Stillwater Area. They have done disaster relief work in several states over the last several years.



**Randy Freeland and Larry Coppock**

**Odos and Diane Henson** have moved to the Golden Oaks Retirement Center in Stillwater. **Sandra Hough** had been asked about **Baker Eeds**, with whom most of those present had worked. Baker is a neighbor to Sandra. Baker will be 89 in August, and he and his wife have slowed down and do not get out much. Old news (forgotten by the Editor last time) **Barbara** and **Les Conner** and **Bonnie** and **Randy Freeland** took a land/cruise tour of the Yukon and Alaska last summer.

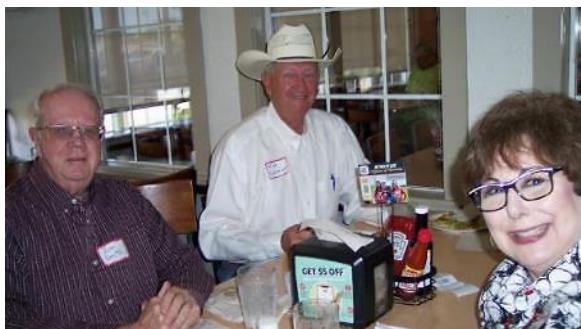
Spouses of both **Earl Weisner** and **Duane Crider** have shared that each are experiencing some health issues but love hearing from former co-workers and friends. Duane's address is 4015 164<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Lynnwood, WA 98037, and Earl's is 5885 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Duncan, OK 73533.



*Dan Runnels, Mark Maples, and Nick Lambeth*

Here is a little more information about retirees who attended the meeting: **Dan Runnels** and **Sharon** just celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They still manage their Taste of Heaven Farm but no longer have the registered Dexter Cattle, but get to visit them down the road. (Thanks, Dan, for letting **Nicky J. Lambeth** give you directions to the meeting place each time). **Greg Ritzman** still serves as an ACES-CTR employee and Earth Team Volunteer at Vinita. He cuts firewood as a hobby and participates in activities with his local church. He works part time with Beacon Environmental Corp. Like several other retirees, **J. Kirk Schreiner** is a board member on the Tillman County Conservation District Board. He ranches northeast of Frederick and raises cattle, wheat, and alfalfa. He also works part time as a real estate agent for Arrowhead Land Company.

**Lillie and Ed Stinchcomb** are both retired and live in their hometown (Hollis, OK). They have their family farms, are active in their church, and serve on various boards and committees. Ed is on the Harmon County Conservation District Board. They have 11 grandkids from 3 kids and their spouses, so they stay very busy. Take this as a retirement profession: **Jamey Wood** referees High School basketball and volleyball. In his spare time he does whatever **Sabrina** tells him to do. **Wayne E. Fjeseth** has a special interest in libraries. He has helped establish new libraries in Cleveland County and surrounding areas. He has established gardens at three library sites and volunteers at Pioneer Library.



*Jim Smith, Kirk Schreiner, and Terry Smith*



*Jamey Wood, Laurie Bogle, and Greg Ritzman*

Please feel free to send something similar to those above that can be used in the October 2025 Newsletter. Do it now before you forget! Send it to: [randy.freeland@suddenlink.net](mailto:randy.freeland@suddenlink.net).

President Stinchcomb announced it is again time to elect officers for the next two years. Nominations were solicited from the group. **Sandra Hough** agreed to serve another two years, if no one wants to assume her position. No nominations were received. **Ed Stinchcomb** and **Kirk Schreiner** were asked if they would serve another two years. Both were in agreement. They were re-elected by acclamation.



*Phil Perryman and Fred Fortney*

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025, at the Golden Corral on MacArthur Boulevard in Oklahoma City. Be sure to put the date on your calendar. The Golden Corral opens at 10:30am, so there is extra time for visiting before the meeting starts at 11:30am.

Berry "Ted" Kuntz, 84, of Guthrie, Oklahoma, passed away Sunday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 in Guthrie.

## OREGON

**Don Stettler, ARCSE Representative**

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

**Bob Caldwell** wrote that he shares the Sequim, Washington vicinity with fellow retiree **Brad Anseth**. Bob went on to say he is now largely retired from conservation-related activities. He did, however, spend a lot of time helping to build a county-wide successful farmland protection program, participating in a Dungeness River Management Team and helping to convert our local irrigation company from open ditches to pressurized pipe. Bob's one remaining professional responsibility keeps him serving as treasurer and water master of a community garden that we started to help build demand for sustainably produced organic foodstuffs. He credits his SCS background helping him the whole way. Having retired from these community activities is allowing Bob to focus on wood carving, something he has done since he was a boy. Last year Bob took Best of Show award for his carving of a barn owl.

**Jolyne and Jon Lea** have been doing a lot of travel during the past few months. At the end of April, Jolyne along with our daughter Rowyn, drove to Chiago to attend the Great Pyrenees National. Their dog had been invited to participate in the Annual Puppy Invitational Competition, a new first for them. A few weeks later, Jon, Jolyne and the dogs drove to Turlock, CA to attend four days of back-to-back Regional Great Pyrenees Specialties. On the way home Jon left Jolyne at the airport in Sacramento, so she could fly to Bozeman, MT to preside over the Annual Meeting of the Western Snow Conference, as the General Chair. After that Jon mostly stayed home and fixed the things he kept breaking, like the riding lawn mower, the chainsaw, the splitting maul, the utility trailer, and a few other odds and ends. Jon and Jolyne were able to get a garden growing. They hope that this the fall, they can make salsa made from the home-grown ingredients.

**Denise Troxel** wrote that it has almost been a year since she retired, and finds things are starting to fall in place. Her mornings are deliciously long and quiet, with no pressing obligations other than feeding the dog. She spent the winter months putting together photo albums. Having decided that as we age, we won't want to look at pictures on our phones but rather at albums that put it together in time step. There are albums for her wedding in 2013, vacations, day trips with friends, and Christmases with family. Further she took on a more daunting task of creating a series of albums about my career with NRCS. It seemed it was always her taking pictures of everything at work. This was especially the case at the Oregon state office--retirements and trainings, and at WNTSC when work involved a lot of travelling the country providing training and speaking at conferences. She would ask herself why so many times and the answer was always because it deserves remembering. So many fantastic people and experiences. Because her career was a huge part of her life she has begun the monumental task of organizing it all--from Day One in Iowa through her retirement celebration in November 2024. It all took four albums! She is sure some might think it a foolish waste of effort, but as time marches along she believes it will be a comforting reminder of a teeny tiny impact that she hopes she made and all the wonderful people I worked with along the way.

The summer quarter retiree lunch is scheduled for July 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Elmer's Restaurant on NE 181st Avenue at noon.

Please allow me to reminisce. About ten months into my full-time career, I was selected to attend a Western Area Training Center Professional Session from October 26<sup>th</sup> to November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1959 on the Campus of California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, California. For me, this was a big deal. For one thing, it was my first trip outside of Oregon. Not only that but I was going to the fabled California.

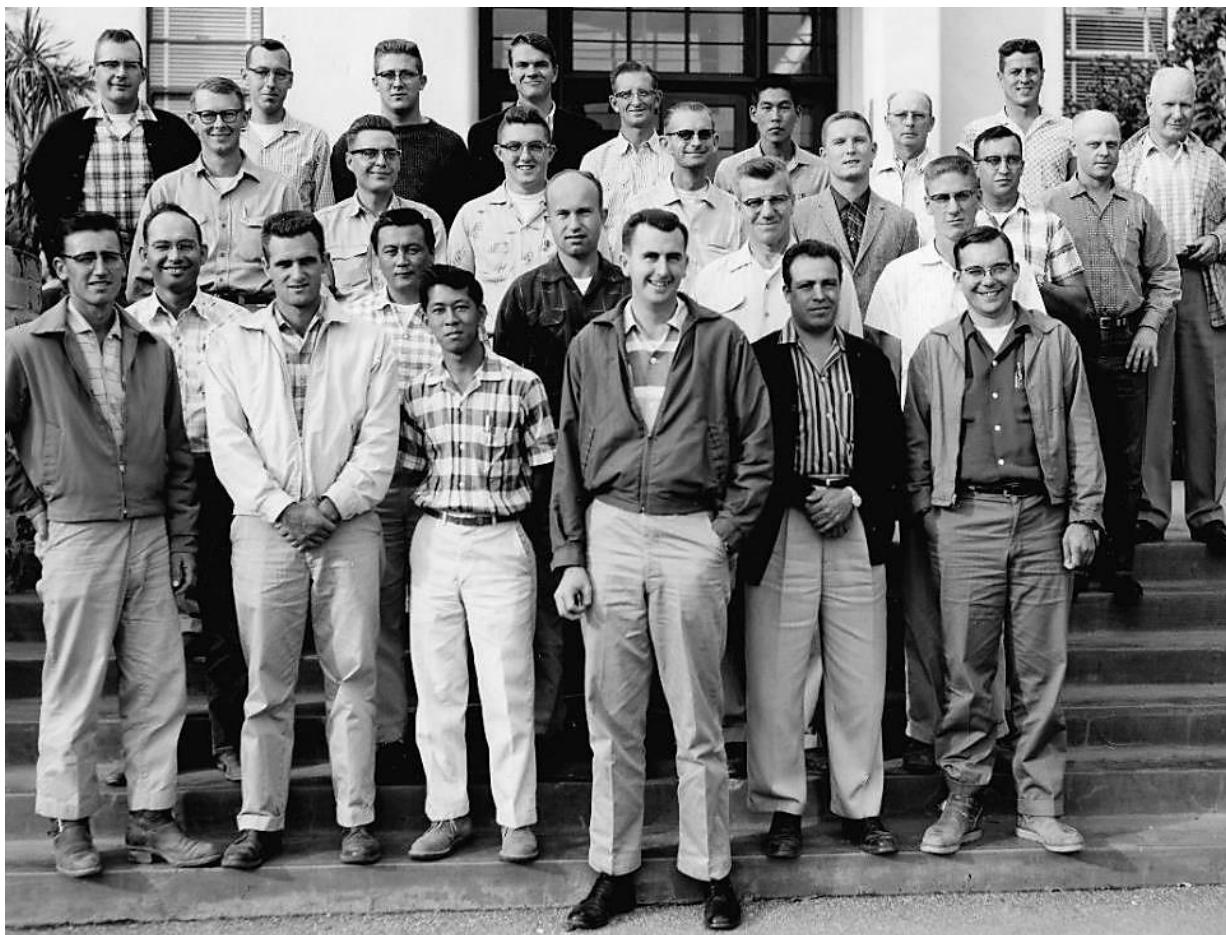
We were given a reduced per diem rate of \$6. Then the usual rate for travelers was \$10. I shared a four-bed motel room with three other trainees. We could get breakfast and lunch at the Cal Poly's cafeteria. Memorable were freshly prepared egg omelets served at breakfast and the wonderful pies baked by the Cal Poly home economic students available for lunch. We could have our evening meal at a restaurant of our choosing. I remember enjoying abalone steaks at the Gold Dragon in downtown San Luis Obispo.

The classroom was a Quonset hut. Instructors were mainly those with expertise in the various topics from within the ranks of the agency. A focus of the training was developing a farm plan for a local farm.

Several evenings each week we attended a Toastmasters-like session to help us with our public speaking skills. On several Saturdays we went on field trips. At the end of the session, we celebrated completing the training at an upscale restaurant at Morro Bay. The program for the evening was each of us giving a short speech which was tape recorded. It was then I heard what my voice sounded like for the first time.

Getting acquainted with fellow trainees was nice. I was one of four attending from Oregon. Others were **Clifford Burton, Richard Patching, and Sidney Smythe**. During my career, three fellow trainees would eventually be at the same office with me. These were **Richard Patching, Elwin Ross, and Gerald Latshaw**.

All in all, it was a very long four weeks for me. We had been advised to leave our wives at home since we would be so busy with the training that included evening sessions and Saturday field trips. I complied with this advice. A compelling reason was I could not afford to bring my wife with me on a GS-5 salary. During the session I celebrated my twenty-third birthday and being promoted to a GS-7 on the same day. Hard for me was missing out on the Willamette Valley's change to autumn with its frosty mornings and occasional rain. At San Luis Obispo I got up every morning to the same bright blue skies, sunshine and birds chirping. When I got off the train in Eugene it was raining lightly. I remember lifting my face to the drizzle. It was so good to be home.



**Attendees at the Western Area Training Center Professional Session 1959. Gerald Latshaw (center second row), William Patching (far left third row), Elwin Ross (third from left third row), and yours truly, Donald Stettler (third from left back row),**

## TENNESSEE

**Dana Ensore, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [dyork818@yahoo.com](mailto:dyork818@yahoo.com)**

NRCS Retiree Meeting – June 19<sup>th</sup> 2025 – Loretta Lynn Buffet – Hurricane Mills, TN.

14 Attendees included **Faye Floyd, Debbie Brasfield, Nancy Harris, Sharon Englett, Patty Lane, Bobby Moore, Andy Neal, John Harris, James Sims, Odell Poyner, Bobby Mimms, Bob Sanders, Allen Crowe, Anna Chidestar** and Jack could not attend due to Jack's recent food surgery.

**Faye Floyd** – Thankful for the close relationships with co-workers during her employment.

**Debbie Brasfield** – Still working with ACES and enjoying retirement.

**Nancy Harris** – Enjoying her grandsons and her unofficial retirement which will be official September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Sharon Englett** – She really enjoyed her employment with the good Christian people in RC&D. Lost 15 cows recently because of vaccination issues.

**Patty Lane** – Having knee replacement surgery June 27<sup>th</sup> and looking forward to summer of physical therapy.

**Bobby Moore** – retired 31 years ago – employees always said “yes sir” and called him Mr. Bobby back in this day. Wife still in advanced care where he visits her everyday except one or two days a year.

**Andy Neal** – Met Mr. Bobby while in college over 40 years ago. Enjoying being a van driver for grand kids. Trying to teach grandson to garden but so far Andy doing the weeding and picking. Enjoys traveling and hope to go to Italy and Greece next.

**John Harris** – Trying to get used to living alone after his wife passed September 4, 2024. He lived all over Tennessee during his employment with SCS/NRCS

**James Sims** – He is 84 now and still working as an ACES employee. His daughter lost her job with IRS, but his son-in-law is still hanging on. Still mows his yard and is enjoying life.

**Odell Poyner** – Working with SCD and still involved with NRCS activities. Main job is Director of Emergency Management for Humphreys County, and they have had numerous projects recently.

**Bobby Mimms** – He is still farming – crops and livestock and small amount of gardening. Has 4.6 grandkids and is a fourth string babysitter.

**Bob Sanders** – At age 80 he built a new house in Dickson County on his niece and her husband's land, and he bought a new car recently; so he is planning on hanging around for a while. They take very good care of him, and he is living a charmed life.

**Allen Crowe** – He is maintaining – still mows his own yard and oversees the family's 235 acres in KY. His twin granddaughters and grandson are grown now. His grandson moved to California, and he and his wife are expecting twin boys next week.

## TEXAS

**Mike Bogard, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [mbogard41@gmail.com](mailto:mbogard41@gmail.com)

**Dave Stockbridge** wrote:

A group of 6 retired NRCSers met for fine food and fellowship on Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at Prima's Pasta, 6108 S. Hulen St, Ft Worth. Included were **Mark Boyson, Dale and Joe Bergeron, John Haberer, Barb and Dave Stockbridge** This was the regular quarterly get together of retirees.

The next get together is scheduled at the same place (Prima's Pasta) at 12 noon, on Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. Please put the date on your long-range schedule and join us and help keep the long-standing tradition of retired NRCS'ers meeting regularly.

**Mike Bogard** reports: **Mary Beth** and I are planning on taking a trip from Texas to California up through Oregon and Washington into Canada later this summer. In the meantime we are in our regular routine. We both have exercises we do before and after breakfast daily.

Mary Beth volunteers three days a week at the Gatesville Boys and Girls Club resale shop. It is amazing how much money the resale shop raises from items people donate. Gatesville Boys and Girls Club provides a place for youngsters after school during school year and five days a week during the summer.

I play golf about three days a week and work on our yard one day a week. We attend church every Sunday and go to a local restaurant with a group of friends to enjoy food and live music one night a week.

## WEST VIRGINIA

**Peg Reese, ARCSE Representative**

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

Coach **Jim Thompson** submitted the following report: The WVU Soils Team was in Stevens Point, WI, April 26–May 2 for the 2025 National Collegiate Soils Contest.



The students who traveled with the WVU Soils Team were **Aubrie Benavidez** (Environmental Soil and Water Sciences), **Damon LeMaster** (Environmental Microbiology), **Talan Linville** (Environmental Soil and Water Sciences), **Josi Lee Scott** (Environmental Soil and Water Sciences), **Madelyn Soble** (Environmental Soil and Water Sciences), **Daisy Stemple** (Environmental Soil and Water Sciences; Wildlife and Fisheries Resources), and **Jaden Wiser** (Environmental Soil and Water Sciences). These seven students from the Davis College of Agriculture and Natural Resources were among the 199 students from 27 schools from across the country that gathered for the 63<sup>rd</sup> annual soil judging championship. The team spent four days practicing for the two-day contest, examining some of the diverse soils and landscapes of central Wisconsin that included mostly sandy soils formed from a variety of glacial parent materials (till, outwash, and other glaciofluvial sediments).



**WVU Soils Team**

I am pleased to report that the WVU Soils Team again performed well in the contest. Among the 106 participants in the individual judging portion of the contest, WVU's **Josi Scott** claimed first place. Josi is the third WVU student to win the individual contest, and the first since 2016. Overall, the WVU Soils Team placed 8<sup>th</sup> in the contest, which was won by the University of Idaho.



**Josi Scott, /WVU soil judge, was recognized as the individual champion, flanked by winners from other states**

As always, I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of all these students, and I hope that you will join me in congratulating them. These students continue to build upon the past success of the WVU Soils Team. I believe this speaks to the quality of the training that these students receive from the School of Natural Resources. It also reflects the overall strength of the academic programs across the Davis College. Thank you for your support of these students, particularly when they are away from campus for extended periods at critical times during the semester.

Jim also gave an update on the WV Chapter of the SWCS Soil Judging Endowment Fund: "While you received my report on the Team's trip to Wisconsin, I also wanted to let you know that the SWCS Endowment is still providing meaningful support to the WVU Soils Team. I do not receive regular updates on the available balance in the endowment, so I do not know how well the investments are performing. I am, though, able to request information on the availability of funds, and for this year's trip to the National Collegiate Soils Contest there was approximately \$4,500 available to cover student travel expenses. The Team also received generous donations from several Conservation Districts and from the WVU Plant and Soil Science Club, so I will be able to carry over a portion of these funds to put toward the Team's trip to North Carolina in October for the Southeast Regional Collegiate Soils Contest.

I am grateful for the ongoing support provided by the SWCS through this endowment. I can assure you that the students on the Team benefit greatly from these funds, which cover 100% of their travel expenses (transportation, lodging, meals, registration). I know that without this type of support, some of these talented and dedicated students would not be able to participate in these valuable learning opportunities."

If you are inclined to help, donations are always needed. Donations can be made on-line at [www.wvuf.org](http://www.wvuf.org). The WV Chapter of the SWCS Soil Judging Endowment Fund number is 3v1001. Or you can find it by going to the WVU Davis College section of the website, and the fund is listed under the Plant and Soil Science Division.

The WV Department of Agriculture, WVU Extension, Mountaineer County CVB, and the WV Agritourism initiative are holding Farm Crawls every weekend in July. Farms across WV will open their gates to visitors, offering unique experiences, tours, and a chance to purchase fresh, local products. A list of participating farms can be found in the July issue of the Market Bulletin, WVDA Facebook, Instagram, and x pages.

## WISCONSIN

**Deb LeGear, ARCSE Representative**

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

17 members of the Wisconsin retiree group met in Shawano in the northeastern part of Wisconsin on May 8<sup>th</sup> at the Shawano Café. A beautiful spring day and smiles all around. It is always great when old friends unite to socialize and recall previous times spent together.



*(L-R) John Campbell, Ted Manning, Joe Waukechon, Mike Koehler*



*(Standing L-R) Mary Evitch, Susan Gundlach, Mary King, Pete Lindgren, Linda Lindgren. (Sitting) Howard Gundlach, Gary Stanke present but not pictured*

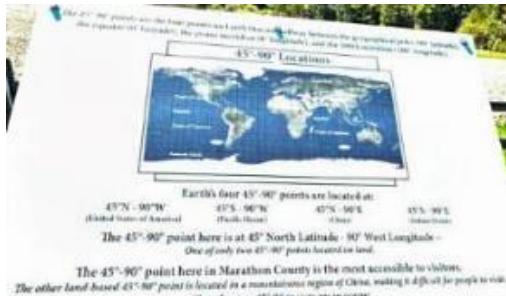


*(Back L-R) Mark Buelke, Dean Sylla, Roger Dahl. (Front L-R) Deb LeGear, Allene Howard, Vic Price*

Four retirees from the west central Wisconsin traveled to Shawano for the day and made a stop at the 45-90 Geographic Marker on the return trip. It was the first time any of us had ever been to the marker so we made the effort and shared the experience.



(L-R) Deb LeGear, Mary Evitch, Allene Howard, Mary King. Geographic Marker is in Athens, Wisconsin



**Only 4 places where 45 degree–90 degree points are located. they are in the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, China, and the United States. The 45–90 degree point in Wisconsin is the most accessible to visitors.**



Marker is in Marathon County in Wisconsin



Allene Howard is standing on the marker located not far off of Highway 29

## SENIOR CONSERVATIONISTS – Paul Benedict.

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.

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 that 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 CHRONICLE

### Senior Conservationist

#### Norman Kopster

**Norman Kopster** was born 10/24/1938 in Ponca, NE. He earned his BS in Agricultural Engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1963. He married Barbara in 1989. He has 4 sons, one daughter, 12 grandchildren, and 14 great grandchildren. He also has one great-granddaughter.

He grew up on a farm in Dixon County, NE and was in the US Army 1958–1960. He was a student trainee in Tyndall, SD, and Lincoln, NE, and an engineer in training (EIT) in Lincoln at the EWPU (1960–1963). He was project engineer (1963–1965) for the Big Carey Watershed in Cedar Vale, KS (1965–1970); field engineer at Council Bluffs, IA (1970–1989); and Assistant State Conservation Engineer in Lincoln, NE (1989–1997)

After retirement he became the sole proprietor at Kopster Engineering. Plattsmouth, NE (1998–2016): approximately 200 projects. 75 of them resulted in actual construction for conservation-sized contractors (it wasn't just paperwork jobs). At different times used eight former co-workers to assist with survey, design, inspection, and geology.

His hobbies include travel, fishing, photography, history, and family. He plans to travel to Washington State with his 90-yr-old sister in July to spend a week with their 94-yr-old sister there.

He lives at Beaver Lake near Plattsmouth. The lake is formed by a dam built in 1974. The dam is 50-yr-old and got an unfavorable rating last year by state inspection. The state has only "favorable" and "unfavorable" ratings. "Unfavorable" is not as bad as it sounds. An Infra-structure Task Force Committee was appointed by the Home Owners Association to hire an engineer and help guide investigation and recommend rehabilitation work. Norman is a volunteer member of the task force.

Norman's contact information is 8891 Verdon Circle, Plattsmouth, NE 68048. (402) 578-2766, [NKByLake@gmail.com](mailto:NKByLake@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](mailto:soilwarden@verizon.net). Always include the position or the spouse's position with SCS/NRCS.*

Surname	Year	<i>In-Memoriam</i> (Note: These are recent notices. For a complete list, please see <a href="http://www.arcse.org">www.arcse.org</a> )
Allen	2025	<b>Dale D. Allen</b> (97) of Temple, Texas, passed away on June 15, 2025. Dale was born on December 28, 1928, in Stephens County, Texas, to Chester and Gladys Allen of Cisco, Texas. Dale earned a degree in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M University in 1949. In 1950, he married Dorothy Weir in Jacksboro, Texas. A proud veteran, Dale served in the United States Army during the Korean War from 1951 to 1953. He graduated from the Army Counterintelligence School and later served as a Special Agent. He worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in Jacksboro, Nocona, Gainesville, and Temple, Texas, ultimately retiring in 1989 State Public Information Officer in the Temple State Office. A prolific writer and passionate advocate for land stewardship, he authored numerous conservation articles and three books: "Short Duration Grazing", "The Uncharted Trail of a Texas Conservationist", and "Taming Texas Dust Storms". Throughout his career, Dale received many accolades, including the USDA's Superior Service Award and two national honors for his work with Earth Team Volunteers. In retirement, he pursued his passion for bridge, owning the Rolling Hills Duplicate Bridge Club from 1993 until June 2019. He achieved the rank of Silver Life Master in the American Contract Bridge League. Dale was a devoted member of First Baptist Church in Temple. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Dorothy "Dot"; his son, Steve; daughter-in-law, Melissa; brothers Fred and Chester Allen; and his parents. He is survived by his daughter, Dixie of Temple; two sons, Dan of Leander and Stan of North Richland Hills, Texas; ten grandchildren, thirteen great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren.
Cail	2025	<b>Mary Carolyn Askey Cail</b> (80) of Stillwater, Oklahoma, passed away on February 3, 2025, at her home surrounded by her family. Carolyn was the wife of Charles Ray Cail, retired Soil Scientist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Carolyn was born in Joplin, Missouri on December 26, 1944. She went to Coffeyville Community College in Coffeyville, Kansas. She then attended Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in Miami, Oklahoma where she obtained an associate degree in music. She then attended Oklahoma State University (OSU) from 1965 to 1966. Where she met Charles at the Homecoming Celebration. They were married on January 27, 1967. Her and Charles lived in several places as he served in the Air Force, but they resided in Texas and Oklahoma mainly. They moved from Bonham, Texas to Woodward, Oklahoma in 1977. Carolyn attended Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva and graduated in 1988 with a bachelor's in science degree in psychology. She worked as a social worker while residing in Woodward. When they moved to Stillwater in 1992, she worked for Oklahoma Department of Human Services. Beginning in 1998, she worked at the OSU college of Education as an information coordinator for the National Rehabilitation Clearing House. She retired in 2006. Carolyn is survived by her husband Charles; daughter Catherine of Enid; son Clay (Brandi) of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma; grandchildren Shalene and (Travis) Tietz of Enid, Katelyn and (Mark) Yackeschi of Enid, and Kevin and (April) Coulter of Enid; great-grandchildren Braden, Rayelynn, Adalayna, and Mark. She is preceded in death by grandson Matt Rider.
Carrington	2025	<b>Julé Lee Carrington</b> (70) of Ankeny, Iowa, passed away May 18, 2025. Julé was the wife of retired Resource Conservationist Donald D. "Don" Carrington, who worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. She was born in Denver, Colorado, on May 17, 1955, to Ed and Polly Temple. She attended Ft. Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, for one year before transferring to the University of Northern Colorado, graduating in 1978. She worked as a third and fourth grade teacher for four and a half years. She married Don on June 1, 1980. She was valiant in moving

		homes four more times as Don changed jobs, working in South Dakota and Iowa. Julé home schooled both daughters Kate and Maggie for twelve years. Julé also worked supervising and providing expertise to other families who were home schooled. She worked at Faith Baptist Bible College for seventeen years, enjoying her contacts with students and customers. Julé was a member of Community Baptist Church.
<b>Cervantes</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Joe Cervantes</b> (72) of Hemingford, Nebraska, passed away on May 22, 2025, at Highland Park Care Center in Alliance, Nebraska. Joe was born May 4, 1953, in Scottsbluff, Nebraska to Pedro and Julia (Salazar) Cervantes. He graduated the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1985 with a bachelor's degree in agriculture. He worked for the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist in Alliance, Lincoln, McCook, Hebron, Stanton and finally back to Alliance, Nebraska and retired at age 55 in 2008. He was united in marriage to Marie (Howe) Cervantes on December 26, 1975. He was a devoted family man, who loved spending time gardening, watching Husker football, and doing some occasional gambling. The greatest joy of his last two and half years was spending time with his grandson. Joe is survived by his wife, Marie, his son Marcos, his daughter Melissa (Lance) Haas, and grandson Garrett Haas.
<b>Conlin</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>William Joseph "Bill" Conlin</b> (79) of Silver Springs, Nevada, passed away February 7, 2025. Bill was born April 5, 1943. He worked for many years as a Soil Conservation Technician for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service out of the Yerington, Nevada Service Center. He retired at the end of 2018. Survivors include his wife Linda and children. A Celebration of Life was scheduled for June 14, 2025, at Dayton State Park near Dayton, Nevada along the banks of the Carson River.
<b>Crosby</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Lewis Paul Crosby</b> (76) of Old Town, Maine, passed away January 18, 2025, in Bangor, Maine, after battling health issues for some time. Lewis was born on October 26, 1948, in Bangor, to Howard and Ruth (McSweeney) Crosby. Lew was stationed in Germany while serving two years in the U.S. Army. After returning home, he graduated from the University of Maine with a degree in agricultural engineering. He settled in Old Town, working his entire career as a hydraulic engineer for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. He and his colleagues traveled the state doing flood studies, working to restore rivers for fish passage, and stabilizing dunes to prevent erosion. Lew loved vintage machines and attended nearly every event at Owls Head Transportation Museum. His 1932 Pontiac was one of his great joys. An avid cyclist, he biked thousands of miles, especially on his favorite loop at Acadia and on the Tour de Cure. Above all, he was always there for his family. His smile and quick wit will be dearly missed and lovingly remembered by his siblings, Herbert (Judy), of Orono, Maine, Janet (Michael) Carey, of Scarborough, Maine, Thomas (Judy) of Falmouth, Maine, and Carol Crosby (Doug Varney) of Greenbelt, Maryland.
<b>Daw</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Kevin Daw</b> (70) of Duluth, Minnesota, passed away on June 15, 2025, surrounded by his loved ones. Kevin was born on January 29, 1955, in Mendota, Illinois, Kevin was the son of Joan (Davis Daw) Draheim and Bruce Daw. He worked in farm Agri-business earning his way through college. He studied at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point and went on to become a Soil Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Kevin's career with the NRCS took him and his family to different areas around Minnesota: The Red River Valley in Crookston, the Driftless Areas of Wabasha and Zumbrota, and the Minnesota River Basin in Morris. He ended his career in Duluth as the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations. Kevin and his wife Celeste were big supporters of scouting. They formed Pack 59 in Zumbrota. Kevin filled the summers taking his family on many camping trips to the BWCA (Boundary Waters Canoe Area) and National Parks. His favorite activity was pheasant and grouse hunting with his dogs and sons. A lifelong dream was achieved in 2016 with a 40-day trip with his wife to the Yukon, Arctic Circle, Brooks Range, Denali, and Kenai. He is survived by his beloved wife, Celeste Hollander Daw, four children, Ben (Laura) Daw of Forest Lake, Minnesota, Rachel (Blake) Bristow of Minnetonka, Minnesota, Chandra (Erich) Ziegler of Marquette, Michigan, Greg (Anja) Daw of Duluth, his eight grandchildren who were the light of his life Matthew, Nathan, Katelyn, Avery, Emma, Hali, Kate, and Lyli, his dear mother Joan (Davis Daw) Draheim and husband/stepfather Dan Draheim, sister Deb (Joe) Lamm, brother Ken (Jane) Daw.
<b>Deyton</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Kenneth Frank "Kenny" Deyton</b> (71) of Burnsville, North Carolina, passed away on May 2nd, 2025, at Mission Hospital in Burnsville. Kenny was born April 16, 1954, the son of the late Frank and Nona Kate Howell Deyton. Following high school graduation, he became a lifeguard at Carolina Hemlocks. In the summer of 1973, he went to fight fires in Montana and California, and worked on the district for several years doing surveying and timber. He then attended Lees-McRae College, and earned his associate degree in forestry from Haywood Community College. After college, Kenny began working for the USDA-Forest Service, then moved over to the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service where he worked as a Soil Conservation Technician out of the Spruce Pine Service Center. Kenny was a member and safety officer of the Burnsville Fire Department and was known for his famous Dutch oven peach cobbler. He was also a member of the Burnsville Masonic Lodge #717 A.F. & A.M. From the time he was a boy, he seemed born to the outdoors. Nature wasn't just a hobby to him – it was his calling and always gave him a sense of peace. Years later, he took that lifelong passion and built something lasting on the land that raised generations of Deytons before him.... Triggers, Traps and Trout. It wasn't just a clever business name, but a reflection of a life lived close to the earth, and it became a haven for those who shared his love for shooting, hunting and fishing. Kenny's survivors include his daughter, Missy Bullard (Mike) of North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; three grandchildren, Camden, Ryker and Hawkins, otherwise known to their PaPa as "The Tribe"; lifetime friend and "buddy", Harriet Vess McGinnis of Mars Hill; his loyal canine companion, Levi; his range buddies from Friday nights and fire-fighting buddies, as well as numerous cousins and too many friends to list.
<b>Dreschsel</b>	<b>2025</b>	Senior Conservationist and Honorary Life Member <b>Leroy John Drechsel</b> (97) of Albion, Illinois, passed away on April 20, 2025, at the Villas of Hollybrook in Mt. Carmel, Illinois. Leroy was born November 10, 1927, in Dwight, Illinois, to John A. and Eleanor Dierks Drechsel. He served his country as a member of the United States Navy. He married Maxine Neal on January 30, 1955, and they enjoyed over 70 happy years of marriage together. He worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as a Soil Conservationist for over 40 years, most of that time as a District Conservationist. He retired from SCS in 1987. Leroy was a Christian, and an active member of Little Prairie Christian Church since 1970. He faithfully served as a church elder and a Sunday School teacher. He also worked for many years testing soil through the Edwards County Farm Bureau. He enjoyed gardening and yard work. After his retirement, he and Maxine delivered Meals on Wheels for the Edwards County Senior Citizens Center. Leroy was very proud of his grandchildren. Leroy is survived by his wife, Maxine; his daughters, Pam Drechsel and Lynn (Doug) Kelsey; and two grandchildren, Marissa Kelsey and Nathan Kelsey. Services were held on April 25, 2025, at Little Prairie Christian Church, west of Albion followed by burial at Little Prairie Cemetery.

Hanson	2025	<b>Ambers E. Hanson</b> (101) of Auburn, Alabama, passed away peacefully in his home on June 9, 2025. Ambers was born on July 31, 1923, to James Madison Hanson and Lora Butler Hanson in Pine Hill, Alabama (Randolph County). He grew up on a farm, which—with the family's labor and know-how—provided much of the food that sustained them during the Depression. He enlisted in the US Army Air Corps in 1942 and served in World War II for three years as an Air Force radio operator and gunner on B-17s and B-24s. He was assigned to the 8th Air Force, 34th Bomb Group, 391st Division. He survived a plane crash during training before he was deployed to Mendlesham, England. From this air base, he flew 25 bombing missions over Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia. At the end of the war, he participated in food drops over Holland. His military awards include the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the World War II Victory Medal, and the European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two Bronze Stars. During the Korean War in 1950, while Ambers was attending Alabama Polytechnic Institute (API, now Auburn University), he was recalled to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. Once again, he served as a radio operator on B-29s and practiced loading the atomic bomb. Although his education was interrupted twice by military service, Ambers graduated from API in March 1952 and married his sweetheart in October 1952. He then began a long career as an agricultural economist with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS), focusing on river basin studies. In 1964-65 he was awarded a Kellogg Fellowship to attend North Carolina State for additional graduate courses. Ambers was a faithful and loving husband to Jean Lowery Hanson throughout their 72 years of marriage. Together they were charter members of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn. After retirement from SCS, the Hansons also owned and operated a horse boarding business with two of their lifelong friends, Dorothy and Walter Grimes. Ambers is survived by his wife, Jean; his children, Scott (Sarah) and Lynn (Mary Lou); 2 grandchildren; and 7 great-grandchildren.
Hedges	2024	<b>Darwin C. Hedges</b> (89) of Seiling, Oklahoma, passed away July 13, 2024. Darwin was born February 4, 1935, Northeast of Seiling, to Faye and Bea Hedges. While in high school, Darwin met the love of his life, Laverne Martin, and on December 24, 1954. Darwin attended Panhandle State University and graduated in 1957 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Husbandry. While there he lettered in football for 4 years and track 3 years. He also attended Colorado State University doing some undergraduate work in Range Management. Darwin worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service beginning in 1955 in Woodward, Oklahoma and continued in Guymon, Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, where he was a range specialist for the southern 1/3 of Oklahoma, and then Little Rock, Arkansas, where he served as the State Range Conservationist. He retired in 1986 after 31 years of dedicated service to farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma and Arkansas. Darwin was very active with civic and church organizations, he volunteered as a "Big Brother", he and Laverne started the Mexico Children's Mission, Inc. after making their first trip to Matehuala, Mexico in 1990. Since that time, they have completed over 50 trips to Mexico helping numerous disadvantaged families there. In 1994, Darwin and Laverne moved back to Seiling, OK. He became an active member of the Seiling First Christian Church where he served as an Elder and was instrumental in starting the Food Pantry. Darwin was preceded in death by his infant son Stuart who died after a few days due to RH blood problem. After nearly 70 years of marriage, Darwin leaves behind his beloved wife and soulmate, Laverne. Other survivors include his sons Steven (Colinda) of Chester, Oklahoma, Scott (Mary) of Nashville, Tennessee, and Stanley (Darbie) of Goshen, Arkansas; 22 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren.
Hummel	2025	Member <b>Judith Carol Hummel</b> (83) of Urbana, Illinois, passed away on May 10, 2025, at home surrounded by her family. Judith was born January 23, 1942, at Frostburg, Maryland, the daughter of Arvel L. and Mary (Raley) Minick. She married John W. Hummel August 1, 1964, in Frostburg, Maryland and he survives. Judith graduated from Catherman's Business School. She was employed at Rocket Center, West Virginia, from 1961 until she married John. She was a stenographer for the United States Bureau of Mines in College Park, Maryland, while John was a graduate student at the University of Maryland. The family moved to Urbana, Illinois in 1966. Judy was employed part-time as a temporary office worker on campus, and later she typed theses for other graduate students while John completed his PhD. Judy continued as a homemaker in New Carrollton, Maryland and Adelphi, Maryland, while John was a faculty member of the University of Maryland. The Hummel family returned to Urbana in 1976 where John began employment with the USDA-Agricultural Research Service. Judy became an employee of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and was a Human Resources Specialist for most of her federal career, retiring in 1996. Over the next 14 years, she used her expertise in federal retirement benefits to council other employees as a part-time employee of Blue Cross Blue Shield. Judy is a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Urbana. She is a member and past president of both the Exchange Club of Urbana, and Chap. 0348 of the National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE). She was a volunteer at the Spurlock Museum and a member of The Illinois Club. She and John participated in the Gourmet Club and the Supper Club. And she made the best potato salad. In addition to her husband John, Judith's survivors include her children, John William Hummel, Jr. of Savoy, Illinois, Lisa Marie Gaylor (Robert) of Englewood, Ohio, Mark Devon Hummel of Urbana, Lori Rene Younker (Steve) of Genoa, Illinois; grandchildren, Ashley White (Max), Mary Catharine Hummel, Bobby Gaylor, Ethan Gaylor, John Hummel, Jack Hummel, Rachel Younker, Benjamin Younker, and one great grandchild, Ryan White
Janssen-Smith	2025	<b>Carrie Lynn Janssen-Smith</b> (69) of Chubbuck, Idaho, passed away on April 14, 2025, in Pocatello, Idaho after a five-year battle with cancer. Carrie was born on July 13, 1955, in Barling, Arkansas. She grew up on the Janssen family farm in Epworth, Iowa. She earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Dubuque in Dubuque, Iowa. She completed a master's degree at the University of Iowa, Iowa City. She continued her studies for her PhD at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington and the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington where she achieved her PhD candidacy status. She met her soul mate, Terry Lee Smith of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania at Washington State University as he was working on his master's degree in Range and Forestry Management. They were married July 24, 1982 in Dubuque, Iowa. In 1987, Carrie began working for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Caliente, Nevada. In 1993, Carrie accepted a position as Resource Conservationist with the NRCS in Pocatello, ID and Terry transferred to the Pocatello BLM office in January 1994. They both retired from Federal Civil Service on July 31, 2015. She enjoyed working with the farmers and ranchers to implement best management practices and reduce soil erosion. In September 1998, Carrie was selected to conduct soil erosion training abroad with a team of other NRCS specialists for two weeks in Bratislava, Slovakia. Carrie's passion for gardening was evident not only in her personal life but also through her work with the Chubbuck United Methodist Church. One of Carrie's most impactful contributions was helping to establish and manage the church's "Garden of Grace". Alongside her husband, they planted seeds at home each February to be transplanted into the garden by mid-May. The produce supported the Idaho Food Bank—a testament to Carrie's generous spirit and commitment to helping and serving others and fighting food insecurity in Idaho. Carrie

		loved horses and shared that passion with her husband through raising and showing American Paint Horses across the Intermountain West. Carrie is survived her husband Terry, her mother Betty A. Janssen and sister Laurie Janssen.
<b>Jones</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Michael T. "Mike" Jones</b> (77) of Purdy, Virginia, passed away peacefully in his home at River's Edge Family Farm on the banks of the Nottoway River, surrounded by his family on June 10, 2025. He proudly served in the U.S. Army, as Sergeant for 2 years, during the Vietnam Era. He was a 1969 graduate of Virginia Tech. He spent his entire career working for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, most of it as the District Conservationist in Dinwiddie, Virginia. Mike was a lifetime member of Grace Church, in Purdy. He was a volunteer with EGRA for 20 years and founding member of Poplar Mount Hunt Club. Mike was a man who loved all things in nature and found great joy in being able to share its beauty and secrets with so many. His passion was teaching both children and adults the fascinations of God's world. He is survived by Patricia H. "Pat" Jones, his loving and devoted wife of 49 years. He is also survived by two sons, Andy Jones (Lexi) and Travis Jones (Meaghan); and two daughters, Kelly Corcoran (Bryan) and Casey Valiente (Scott); ten grandchildren Mason, Levi, and Silas Jones; Grayson and Aubrey Jones, Michael and Austin Corcoran, Tyler, Marc, and Maria Valiente.
<b>Kucera</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Karen Marie Kucera</b> (64) of Lincoln, Nebraska, passed away May 18, 2025. Karen was the wife of Michael J. Kucera, retired Agronomist at the National Soil Survey Center of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Karen was born on September 7, 1960, in Sioux City, Iowa to Francis "Pat" and Rose "Betty" (Day) Kneifl. She received her bachelor's degree from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Karen was united in marriage to Michael Kucera on April 22, 1989, at St Peter's Catholic Church in Newcastle, Nebraska. They have made their home in Lincoln for the past 32 years. Karen had just recently retired from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services where she worked as an adjudicator. Karen's family and faith were very important to her. She loved caring for her family, praying for them, cooking, baking, singing, and gift giving. Karen's survivors include her husband Mike and their children: Andy (Alex) Kucera and their daughter Charlotte, Zac Kucera and Megan Kucera.
<b>Kuntz</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Berry "Ted" Kuntz</b> (84) of Stillwater, Oklahoma, passed away June 1, 2025, in Guthrie. Ted was born July 9, 1940, in Apache, Oklahoma to Henry John and Lula (Mason) Kuntz. Ted went to Stillwater High School and Oklahoma State University (OSU). Besides football, Ted came in #2 in North America for Poultry Judging, as well as bringing the OSU Poultry Judging Team into second place. Ted was initiated into the Kappa Delta pi Honor Society at OSU in 1962. He worked over forty years as an economist with USDA in the Food Safety and Inspection Service, Economics Research Service, and then joined the Soil Conservation Service at the South Technical Center in Fort Worth Texas. From there he went to Grazing Lands Institute, Fort Worth, and then to the Oklahoma State Office. Ted retired from the National Resources Conservation Service in Stillwater in 2006. He is survived by his wife Linda (of almost 60 years), sons Kevin (Judy) and Scott (Jerry); and five grandchildren Nicholas, Christian, Noah, Emma, and Anne.
<b>Leach</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Donald Sidney Leach</b> (93) of Portland, Oregon, passed away on December 24, 2024, in Portland. Don was born March 27, 1931, in Portland to Sidney Henry Leach and Mary Ann (Gudge) Leach. He grew up on his parents' small farm, helping milk cows and mowing hay. His early education was in a 2-room schoolhouse on Sunnyside Road near Clackamas, Oregon. Don met his wife, Joanne (Heady) Leach while in college at the Vanport Extension Center by offering to drive her home so she didn't have to wait for the bus. He continued his education at Oregon State University, while Joanne went into nurse's training. They were married on July 20, 1955. Don began working for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist, beginning in Hermiston Oregon, then transferring to McMinnville Oregon, Clatskanie Oregon, Silverton Oregon, and finally Astoria OR, where he lived for 50 years before moving to Hillsboro. He enjoyed rock hunting, fishing, camping, and gardening. He spent many enjoyable hours cutting, polishing and creating jewelry, belt buckles, book ends, and many more beautiful things from the rocks he collected. After he retired, he continued to use his expertise by helping the local diking district maintain the dike on the Lewis & Clark River near his home. He is survived by Joanne, his wife of 69 years, and his children Donald Leach, Virginia (Leach) Mickelson, and Thomas Leach.
<b>Mackey</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Tommy Lee Mackey</b> (81) of Woodville, Texas, passed away May 12, 2025 at Woodville Health & Rehab Center in Woodville, Texas. Tommy was born October 30, 1943, to Earl Lee and Amye Boen Mackey in Cleburne, Texas and raised in Godley, Texas. He attended Tarleton State College and graduated from Sam Houston State majoring in Agriculture. He worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist for 35 years. Tommy met his wife Ann while attending Godley Elementary School. They attended the same schools together and married while completing their college degrees. After retirement, they spent time traveling extensively throughout North America. Tommy was a people person and never met a stranger. He was a master storyteller telling his tales while punching you on the shoulder. His hobbies were fishing, bird hunting, and golfing. Tommy's greatest pride and joy was his four grandchildren and great grandchild and never missed any of their life events. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Ann Mackey of Woodville; sons, Jeff Mackey of Houston and Scott Mackey of Dayton; grandchildren, Haley, Aidan, Aethan, Hannah and Micah; and great granddaughter, Parker Ann.
<b>Mayo</b>	<b>2025</b>	Member <b>Bailey Ross Mayo</b> (89) of Lubbock, Texas, passed away peacefully on May 22, 2025. Bailey was born on May 18, 1936, in Winters, Texas. He was a proud graduate of Texas Tech University. Through his work with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service, Bailey made a significant impact in soil conservation. He worked as an Agronomist and Assistant State Conservationist. His commitment to nurturing the land echoed his love for nature and the many lives it supported, leaving a legacy that will continue to inspire future generations. An avid fisherman and hunter, Bailey found joy and fulfillment in the great outdoors. Bailey was a devoted husband to his late wife Mary Lee. He later found love again with Sandy Lehman, who stood beside him in life's later chapters. He was a proud father to sons Dewayne Gray and Byron Gray. He cherished and had a special bond with both his daughters-in-law, Susie Gray and Kathi Gray. His family grew to include 4 beloved granddaughters; Amber, Maranda, Katelyn, and Autumn, and 4 treasured great-grandchildren; Skylar, Everly, Hendrix, and Ryker, all of whom brought him boundless joy. Bailey is survived by his devoted partner, Sandy Lehman; his son, Dewayne Gray (Susie); his son Byron Gray (Kathi); his granddaughters and grandchildren. Bailey was preceded in death by his late wife Mary Lee Mayo.
<b>Melton</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Deborah Kay Lindsey Melton</b> (74) of Temple, Texas, passed away on June 21, 2025. Debbie was the wife of ARCSE Member Charles Thomas Melton, retired Civil Engineer for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Debbie was born on November 17, 1950, in San Antonio, Texas, to Mr. and Mrs. James "Jim" Lindsey. She attended Texas A&M University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1973. During her time at Texas A&M University,

		<p>she met Charles Thomas Melton from Sallisaw, Oklahoma, who she married on May 27, 1972. For 53 years she followed Charles all over Texas from the Red River to the Rio Grande Valley to the Texas Panhandle and even up to Salina, Kansas in 1989. After more than 10 years away from Texas, Charles and Debbie moved to Temple, Texas in 2000, where they sank roots in the community they call home. Along the way and over the thousands of miles, she helped raise two sets of twin boys. Debbie devoted her life to making a home for her sons and her husband through serving others and seldom asking for anything or doing anything for herself. She was a friend to everyone who met her, and a true prayer warrior, who devoted herself to praying for others and writing cards and letters to friends, relatives, and other loved ones each morning before she went about the rest of her day. Debbie loved her many colorful hats, which she proudly wore as she hugged everyone she met, friend and stranger alike. She never met a stranger, and anyone who had the privilege of meeting her knew she had a heart of gold and loved them just as they were. Even with her last breath on Earth, her family and loved ones knew she was praying for them, because that's just who she was. She was preceded in death by a grandson, Timothy Aaron Melton. In addition to her husband of 53 years, Charles, Debbie's survivors include four sons, Charles Howard of Silver Springs, Maryland, Paul David of New York City, New York, James Andrew (Melissa) of Benbrook, Texas, and John Mark (Amanda) of Dallas, Texas; and four grandchildren, CJ Melton of Port Orchard, Washington, Mark and Hannah Melton of Dallas, Texas, and Ethan Melton of Benbrook, Texas.</p>
<b>Noble</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Wayne Leonard Noble</b> (85) of Colome, South Dakota, passed away on, June 21, 2025, at the Winner Regional Long Term Care Facility in Winner, South Dakota. Wayne was born September 12, 1939, to Elias C Noble and Millie (Konop) Noble in Winner, South Dakota. He attended South Dakota State College graduating in 1961 with a degree in Animal Husbandry. Wayne married Sharon Meeder October 2, 1962, also of Winner, being blessed with six children. Wayne began working for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in South Dakota as the Range Conservationist in Sturgis, Hot Springs, and Martin. He was the District Conservationist at White River, Herreid and Burke. His final assignment was in Lake Andes as District Conservationist and then the Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator in Charles Mix County and in the surrounding areas until his retirement in 1996. Wayne was an avid horseman, training 47 horses for cutting and ranch work. Wayne valued the company of family and friends on many hunting and fishing trips within the state. Wayne retired to Colome, South Dakota where RP (retinitis pigmentosa) claimed the rest of his eyesight. He was well known for his positive attitude despite his blindness and did not let it keep him from community involvement. Wayne's survivors include his children, Renae (James) Kampa of Black Hawk, South Dakota, Valerie Noble of Meckling, South Dakota, Yvonne (Gavin) Clark of Beresford, South Dakota, Wade Noble of Winner, South Dakota, James (Mary) of Aurora, South Dakota and Natalie (Derek) Keen of Crosby, Texas, and his former wife, Sharon Noble of Mitchell, South Dakota; 12 grandchildren, Rachel Kampa, Terrance (Ericka) Kampa, Robert (Casey) Osterberg, Heidi (Nathan) Evilsizer, Yolanda (Josh) Dirnberger, Lennea (Garrett) Olson, Claire, Andrew, and Theodore Noble and Adelaide, Aurora and Marigold Keen and 7 Great-grandchildren, Juniper Kampa, Kennedy and Gracen Osterberg, Isabelle, Issac, Melody and Noelle (plus 1) Dirnberger.
<b>Purnell</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Julius Earl Purnell</b> (68) of Amarillo, Texas, passed away on April 20, 2025, in the comfort of his own home in the presence of family and loved ones. Julius was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi on November 23, 1956, to the late Julia Marie Goldsberry and June Dotson. He accepted Christ into his heart at an early aged and attended Second Baptist Church in Mississippi and Antioch Baptist Church in Dalhart, Texas, until he relocated. He and his brother were adopted at a very early age by their great grandfather Ben Purnell (Daddy Ben), whom his teachings highly impacted much of his hard work and success. Julius attended Port Gibson High School Class of 1974 and later went on to attend Alcorn State University Class of 1978. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in animal science which led him to work as a Soil Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for thirty-five years until he retired in Amarillo, Texas. The last few years of his life were spent with his high school sweetie Bell Purnell who cared for him until both of their health began to fail. He had many passions including Dallas Cowboys Football, his Alma Matter Port Gibson and Alcorn University, agriculture and his career, classic cars drawing, western movies, cooking, rhythm and blues music, and his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Julius was preceded in death by his former wife, Bell Purnell. Survivors include his daughters, Tyrise Jackson, LenTanya Denise Summage, Keisha Rena Purnell, and Sheneeka Annette Purnell; grandchildren, Audreania Goods (Frankie), Keyona Evans, Daquan Jackson, Phaedra Watts, Michael Harris, Moniquesa Flanagan, Sa'Nieya Stovall, Kyrie Gross; great grandchildren, Daylen Jackson, Daquan Jackson Jr., Akeem Williams Jr., Kyrie Williams Mylan Jackson, and Milani Jackson; two brothers, Albert Purnell (Lois), Y'nassia Goldsberry (Priscilla), and D'Albert Purnell (Lauren).
<b>Shirley</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Charles Edgar Shirley</b> (85) of Mingo, Iowa, passed away peacefully on June 29, 2023, at the Salem Lutheran Home in Elk Horn, Iowa. Charles was born on November 08, 1937, at home near Munterville, Iowa, in Wapello County to Paul and Isabell (Owens) Shirley. Charles attended Iowa State University, graduating with his Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy in 1959. Shortly after graduating, Charles married Barbara DeLong in Lytton, Iowa. Over the next 10 years they had three children. His career began as a farmer with his father and brother, John. This was followed by 30 years with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In 1979 Charles and his family were invited to Washington, DC where he received a national USDA award for excellence in soil conservation. His federal career culminated in the State Office in Des Moines, during which time he met Trudy Lewis. They married in 1989. Post-NRCS, Charles became a licensed real estate appraiser, having his own company, CES-LTD. Throughout both careers Charles farmed on the side. Survivors include two former wives (Barbara, Trudy), three children – Lori (Lee) of Ames, Iowa, Jolene (David) of Johnstown, Colorado, and Sam (Brinda) of Walnut, Iowa; and four grandchildren (Brandi, Dan, Skylar, Luke).
<b>Simon</b>	<b>2025</b>	Member <b>John Joseph Simon</b> (85) of Hampden, Maine, passed away peacefully on May 1, 2025, at a Bangor hospital, with his wife and son at his bedside. John was born on May 28, 1939, in Millinocket, Maine, the son of Joseph C. Simon and Marie Victoria ("Cecile") Simon (née Plourde). He attended the University of Maine, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Engineering, in 1963. In May of 1964, John met the love of his life, Noreen Marie Thorne, who agreed to accompany him on a date (their first) to celebrate his twenty-fifth birthday. Later that year, they married. They celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary last October. John worked in various roles for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) for thirty-four years, first in Pennsylvania (where he and his young family lived for more than a decade) and then in Maine. He retired in 1995. After his retirement John served as the ARCSE State Representative for Maine for 24 years. His love of the natural beauty of his home state inspired him, during and after his time with the SCS, to design innovative solutions to preserve the water quality of Maine's streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes. In addition

		to his wife, John is survived by his son, Peter John Simon; his daughter-in-law, Kristin Dorothea Wald; his grandchildren, Beckett Walden Simon and Eliza Thea Simon, and many nieces and nephews. A Mass of Christian Burial was held May 9, 2025, at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, St. John's Catholic Church, in Bangor.
Ummel	2025	Senior Conservationist and Honorary Life Member Donald Keith Ummel (96) of Des Moines, Iowa, passed away on March 28, 2025, at Taylor House Hospice in Des Moines. Don was born March 30, 1928, to Henry and Katherine (Sargent) Ummel and raised on the family farm at Arnold, Ness County, Kansas. He graduated from Kansas State University (K-State) in 1949, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture. After discharge from the Army as Sergeant First Class, he married Doris Jackson on November 22, 1952, in Stockton, Kansas. During the summer before his senior year at K-State, he worked as a soil conservation aide at Dighton, Kansas. This launched his career with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) that would run more than 35 years, interrupted only by the Korean War in 1950. He spent 1951 to 52 in Korea with the United States Army 14th Combat Engineer Battalion. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service. His career with SCS took him and Doris from Kansas to Nebraska, Vermont, back to Kansas, and finally to Iowa. He was the State Administrative Officer in Des Moines when he retired in 1985. After retiring from SCS, he worked six tax seasons for H&R Block. He also spent many hours in his workshop building holiday decorations and birdhouses that became gifts for family and friends. In retirement, he enjoyed keeping track of the planting and harvest on land Doris inherited in Kansas. Don was dedicated to his family, his community, and his church. He and Doris were married 64 years. Not long after moving to Des Moines they became charter members of New Hope United Methodist Church. They were actively involved on many church committees and in the Merry Mates couples fellowship club. Don's survivors include his children, Debbie (Mark) Ediger, Denny (Robyn) Ummel, and Dawn (John) Goodlove; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; a brother, Marvin; a sister, Eunice; and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife Doris in 2017.



*Lookout Mountain, Georgia*

**DEADLINE FOR THE SEPT/OCT 2025 NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS IS AUGUST 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2025.**