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NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Retired Conservation Service Employees

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The **ARCSE Newsletter** is published bi-monthly by the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE)

Website: www.arcse.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Becky Fletcher, ARCSE President

Happy New Year! I hope your holidays were happy and joyful. ARCSE has been busy these past two months, and we are not slowing down as we slide into 2026.

- Watch for the announcement of another all-member video conference meeting coming soon featuring national leaders discussing the Farm Bill, budgeting and other important updates.
- We will be partnering again with SWCS to hire a summer intern. An announcement will be coming out soon.
- Our membership drive continues through April – please jump in and ask at least one person to join us. We are especially targeting those who recently retired from NRCS.
- Our social media efforts are stronger than ever and attracting new followers.
- We continue to seek mentors for new NRCS employees.
- We have new partnership training opportunities coming our way.

Special thanks to **Craig Derickson, Julie MacSwain, Paul Benedict, Chris Tippie, Jack Carlson and Becky Ross** for their help in organizing the last two online meetings for members and state representatives. We have received positive feedback on these sessions and will continue to look for opportunities to share information with you.

There are several important updates in this issue of the newsletter. Please take a moment to read. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, please know we are dedicated to helping you stay connected.

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED CONSERVATION SERVICE EMPLOYEES



2026 Annual Dues are due January 1, 2026.

Visit With Harold Klaege

ARCSE held its first special online event on November 7th, with **Harold Klaege**. Harold is the state representative for the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), and he works to keep Nebraska's ARCSE members updated on their actions, especially legislative activities that affect retirees and conservation. **Craig Derickson**, editor of the News from the Potomac and retired state conservationist, facilitated the meeting.

Harold was a former state conservationist in Kansas, an agricultural engineer with experience in watershed programs. He also served as the National Watershed Program Manager in Washington DC and in several state office positions in Nebraska. He began the meeting with an overview of the NARFE organization which is a federation with state chapters and local meetings. He explained NARFE's role as a legislative voice and information resource for both current federal employees and retirees, highlighting their advocacy against cuts to retirement and health benefits, support for full COLAs, and efforts to strengthen the OPM retirement system.

Harold discussed recent legislative efforts, including the "Big Beautiful Bill," where NARFE successfully opposed proposed increases in FERS contribution rates, elimination of the FERS annuity supplement, and the introduction of at-will employment terms.

Harold also shared how NARFE successfully partnered with groups like AARP to advocate for the elimination of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO), which took effect in January after 40 years of advocacy. He explained how these provisions affected federal employees and certain state workers by reducing Social Security benefits but noted that some individuals could still receive spousal benefits under the government pension offset.

Harold emphasized the importance of local advocacy in securing legislative victories, highlighting NARFE's role in lobbying efforts alongside other organizations like the International Association of Firefighters and California Teachers Association. He shared his personal experiences of engaging with local representatives and efforts to stay informed about policy changes. He used the example of the recent Nebraska campaign to reduce taxes on Social Security and Civil Service retirees. Harold stressed the

importance of continuous communication with leaders to influence policy decisions. NARFE membership offers many ways to do that. Two current concerns are potential changes to health insurance and Medicare Part B for new retirees.

Harold concluded the conversion by urging attendees to stay informed and involved. Lastly, he shared information about NARFE's commitment to Alzheimer's research through donations. He encouraged ARCSE members to join NARFE and support this important effort. After a question-and-answer session, Craig thanked Harold for his service and re-emphasized ARCSE's opportunities for partnership with NARFE.

NARFE is offering two online upcoming webinars on FEHB and Medicare prescription drug plans. To learn more about membership and the organization visit their website <https://www.narfe.org/>.

ARCSE is planning another special online event early in the new year. Watch for an invitation in your email.

State Representatives' Zoom Meeting Recap

We hosted 26 participants on our December 12th zoom meeting for state representatives.

Paul Benedict, Membership Chair gave a brief overview of the state representative roles and responsibilities (you can find these on the website at arcse.org). **Rob Lawson**, state conservationist from Nebraska, joined us to provide his insight into establishing and maintaining a good relationship with the state conservationist. Rob does a great job of keeping connected with retirees. He promotes ARCSE membership and participates in retiree gatherings. Rob has developed a letter that includes information about how to join ARCSE, Earth Team and ACES when an employee is retiring. Your ARCSE regional vice president will provide you a copy of Rob's letter.

Rob encouraged state reps to email and/or call the state conservationist's executive assistant when first connecting with the state office. Getting to know this person is an important first step.

In your discussion with the state conservationist Rob suggested to ask who they would like for you to communicate with regularly – it may be the business manager, public affairs specialist, assistant for management and strategy, or someone else. Every state can be potentially different.

Rob also advised not to assume a new state conservationist knows about our organization. Also, invite the state conservationist to your retirement gatherings and share your updates with them.

Renee Bouldin, Program Director at SWCS, stressed the importance of our partnership and engagement at the chapter level. SWCS and ARCSE have worked together since the beginning of our organization. We can offer each other many benefits and opportunities such as promoting each other's state events, swapping articles for newsletters, encouraging membership, co-hosting meetings and events and more.

Retirees are offered a reduced membership rate of \$75. Renee shared the new SWCS website and the membership login in page <https://www.swcs.org/>. Members of the Society can use their login to access their local chapter leaders. If you are not a member, contact Renee at renee.bouldin@swcs.org, and she will provide a list of local leaders and their contact information.

Renee also encouraged us to connect with the Emerging Leaders Program participants. These young conservationists are eager to get involved and help. They may be willing to help plan an event or do other tasks to assist state reps.

Mentoring Update – Craig Dereckson has kept in touch with the Management and Strategy staff at NHQ regarding our willingness to assist with mentoring. He reminded everyone that the mentoring application on our website is functioning and will continue to be used. Craig reiterated that there is a demand for mentoring.

Rich Duesterhaus expressed his appreciation for being able to participate in this call and have some dialogue with ARCSE. NACD is working with the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) to plan and host important training for NRCS and conservation district employees. He introduced Jan Thomas, NACD training coordinator. There is a high level of interest for training in conservation planning, soil health and cultural resources among new employees. It is important that part of this training be done in person. ARCSE could help NCP and NACD locate trainers for upcoming courses around the country over the next 5 years. There are three pilot sessions planned. The first will be in February 2026 in Texas. ARCSE members who might be interested are invited to monitor these courses (contact Becky Fletcher if interested). Train-the-trainer courses will be offered. Watch for more information as ARCSE continues this conversation.

Several questions and suggestions were discussed, and the board will follow up. Special thanks to **Paul Benedict, Chris Tippie, Craig Derickson, John Mueller, Julie MacSwain, Becky Ross and Robin Martinek** for helping us organize this session.

Update on ARCSE Mentoring Project

The ARCSE organization has been promoting mentoring with NRCS over the past two years. The Mentoring Team is made up of **Craig Derickson, Julie MacSwain, Bill Ward, Chris Tippie, and Becky Fletcher**.

Calendar year 2025 has brought a flurry of activities and changes to NRCS with the new Administration and the recent Government shutdown. However, ARCSE remains committed to the benefits of mentoring and has taken steps to re-engage with NRCS on mentoring activities. ARCSE will continue to encourage state representatives to work with NRCS at the state level to build a strong relationship between the organizations and to work on a state mentoring strategy.

Mentoring Training: The Team has presented mentoring information and training at the SWCS Annual Meeting in 2024 and 2025. ARCSE is also planning to offer mentoring training to members in 2026. Those interested in mentoring training should make a request through their state representative and to the ARCSE Board.

Online Application Process: ARCSE maintains an online mentoring program application on the website at <https://arcse.org/resources/arcse-nrcs-mentoring-program/>. Persons interested in being involved in mentoring can use that process to apply to the program and can also use the site to request training.

State Mentoring Plans: ARCSE will continue to offer assistance to State Conservationists and state representatives in developing a customized state strategy that results in a cadre of active mentors. **Bill Ward**, ARCSE regional contact in CA, has developed a template to assist states to develop a mentoring action plan for their state.

Mentoring Stories of Success: ARCSE will continue to publicize stories of success about mentoring, projects with ACES employees, and Earth Team volunteer activities. Please contact your Regional Vice President if you have a story of success that you want to share with others through the ARCSE newsletter. Pictures and caption notes always help tell the story that readers will enjoy.

NOTES FROM THE POTOMAC

—Craig Derickson, Dec. 25, 2025

Ending the Government Shutdown

The 43-day US government shutdown (October 1 to November 12, 2025) ended when President Donald Trump signed the "Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026" (H.R. 5371) into law. The shutdown was longest in history and surpassed the 35-day shutdown of 2018–2019 during the first presidency of Donald Trump, over expanding barriers on the US and Mexico border. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_shutdowns_in_the_United_States#:

The 2025 government shutdown was caused by a stalemate between the Trump administration and congressional Democrats over federal spending priorities, primarily centering on healthcare subsidies and the administration's proposed budget cuts. According to a news release from the Public Broadcast System (PBS) "the stalemate centered on expiring Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidies, leading to potential double-digit premium hikes for millions, causing partisan deadlock with Democrats pushing for extension and Republicans seeking broader reforms." See: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/handful-of-senate-democrats-join-gop-to-break-funding-stalemate-first-step-toward-ending-shutdown>.

The resolution that ended the shutdown was a compromise among Republicans and Democrats that involved a combination of full-year funding for certain agencies and a short-term continuing resolution (CR) for the rest of the government. The legislation funds three full-year spending bills to support the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration; the legislative branch (Congress itself); and Department of Defense construction projects and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The rest of Government could see another funding battle when the CR funding runs out on January 30, 2026. See: <https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2025/11/senate-advances-funding-bill-to-end-record-shutdown>.

The remaining federal government agencies received short-term funding extensions at their previous (FY 2025) levels through a continuing resolution valid only until January 30, 2026. This provides the set up for another potential funding deadline early in the new year.

The primary point of contention that led to the shutdown was the expiration of expanded Affordable Care Act (ACA) premium tax credits. The final bill did not include an extension of these subsidies. However, as a concession to Democrats, Senate Republican leadership promised to allow a separate Senate vote on the issue by mid-December 2025.

The bill included provisions guaranteeing back pay for all federal employees (both furloughed and excepted/working without pay) and reversed the layoffs (reductions in force) that the Trump administration had initiated during the shutdown period. For more details on the specifics of funding in the CR (HR 5371) see: <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/government-funding-senate-passes-three>.

Agreement on the resolution was able to be reached after a bipartisan breakthrough in the Senate, where a sufficient number of Democrats joined Republicans to advance the funding measure, citing the growing negative impact of the longest-ever government shutdown in the country. According to a report from PBS, "The vote was a significant moment in a six-week stalemate that had resulted in the longest government shutdown in US history. The shutdown caused widespread disruptions, including mass flight cancellations and threats to food assistance programs." <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/handful-of-senate-democrats-join-gop-to-break-funding-stalemate-first-step-toward-ending-shutdown>.

Fiscal Year Funding for NRCS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) budget for fiscal year (FY) 2026 was approved as part of a larger spending package that ended a government shutdown, although with some debate over Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) funding. This deal, which also included a one-year farm bill extension, stabilized programs and staffing, allowing NRCS to resume full operations after being frozen during the shutdown. See more at: <https://farmpolicynews.illinois.edu/2025/11/govt-shutdown-ends-farm-bill-programs-extended>.

Key Details of the Funding:

Full-Year Funding: The Agriculture-FDA Appropriations Act provided full funding for USDA for Fiscal Year 2026, preventing further stopgap measures.

NRCS Operations: Funding was restored for NRCS staff and operations, allowing them to reopen and process applications.

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA): While the Trump Administration's budget proposed massive cuts (88%) to CTA, Congress approved a much smaller reduction (around 5%), preserving most of the program's functions. Conservation Operations was funded at \$850 million for FY 26, compared to about \$895 in FY 25 – about a 5% reduction.

Farm Bill Extension: The package included a one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, allowing existing programs to continue while Congress works on a new, multi-year bill. See more at:

<https://farmpolicynews.illinois.edu/2025/11/govt-shutdown-ends-farm-bill-programs-extended>.

USDA Launches New Regenerative Agriculture Pilot. (from USDA Press Release)

On December 10, 2025, US Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins, alongside US Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., launched a \$700 million Regenerative Pilot Program to help American farmers adopt practices that improve soil health, enhance water quality, and boost long-term productivity, all while strengthening America's food and fiber supply. Building off the Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy released in September, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is also investing in research on the connection between regenerative agriculture and public health, as well as developing public health messaging explaining this connection.

"Protecting and improving the health of our soil is critical not only for the future viability of farmland, but to the future success of American farmers. In order to continue to be the most productive and efficient growers in the world, we must protect our topsoil from unnecessary erosion and improve soil health and land stewardship. Today's announcement encourages these priorities while supporting farmers who choose to transition to regenerative agriculture. The Regenerative Pilot Program also puts Farmers First and reduces barriers to entry for conservation programs," said Secretary Brooke Rollins.

"In September, under President Trump's leadership, we released the MAHA Strategy Report, which includes a full section on soil health and land stewardship," said HHS Secretary Kennedy. See the MAHA report at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/The-MAHA-Strategy-WH.pdf>. "Today's regenerative farming announcement directly advances that deliverable. If we intend to Make America Healthy Again, we must begin by restoring the health of our soil."

"We cannot truly be a wealthy nation if we are not also a healthy nation. Access to wholesome, nutritious, and affordable foods is a key tenet of the Make America Healthy Again agenda, which President Trump has directed this administration to execute across all government agencies," said CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz. "I commend Secretary Rollins and Secretary Kennedy for today's efforts to strengthen our nation's food supply."

Protecting Soil and Reducing Production Costs

In response to the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, Congress created the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help people help the land and improve conservation of the nation's soil and water resources.

This action led to improved soil health and natural resources management which, in turn, has led to increased productivity. Between 1948 and 2021, total US farm production increased 190% while total farm inputs—such as land, labor, and water—decreased 2% in the same period.

However, current conservation programs at USDA have become overly burdensome and farmers are bogged down with red tape whenever they try to adopt soil health and regenerative agriculture practices. Even with the improved soil health since the creation of NRCS, USDA data shows that farmers recently reported that 25% of acres had water-driven erosion concerns and 16% of acres had wind-driven erosion concerns.

The Regenerative Pilot Program directly addresses these challenges by cutting administrative burdens for producers, expanding access to new and beginning farmers, and boosting yields and long-term soil resilience across operations.

About the Regenerative Pilot Program

Administered by NRCS, this new Regenerative Pilot Program delivers a streamlined, outcome-based conservation model—empowering producers to plan and implement whole-farm regenerative practices through a single application. The initiative highlights USDA's commitment to putting Farmers First and advancing the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) agenda by building a healthier, more resilient food system.

In FY2026, the Regenerative Pilot Program will focus on whole-farm planning that addresses every major resource concern—soil, water, and natural vitality—under a single conservation framework. USDA is dedicating \$400 million through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and \$300 million through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to fund this first year of regenerative agriculture projects.

Producers can now bundle multiple regenerative practices into one application, streamlining the process and increasing flexibility for operations. The program is designed for both beginning and advanced producers, ensuring availability for all farmers ready to take the next step in regenerative agriculture.

Chief's Advisory Council

To keep the Regenerative Pilot Program grounded in practical, producer-led solutions, NRCS is establishing the Chief's Regenerative Agriculture Advisory Council. The Council will meet quarterly, with rotating participants, to advise the Chief of NRCS, review implementation progress, and help guide data and reporting improvements. Its recommendations will shape future USDA conservation delivery and strengthen coordination between the public and private sectors.

Public + Private Partnerships

There is a growing desire among private companies to fund conservation practices that improve natural resources management. This announcement unlocks new opportunities for USDA to leverage existing authorities to create public-private partnerships within

NRCS conservation programs. These partnerships will allow USDA to match private funding, in turn stretching taxpayer dollars further, and bringing new capacity to producers interested in adopting regenerative practices.

Companies interested in partnering with USDA NRCS in the Regenerative Pilot Program can email regenerative@usda.gov for more information. See this USDA Press Release at: <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/12/10/usda-launches-new-regenerative-pilot-program-lower-farmer-production-costs-and-advance-maha-agenda>.

National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026

On December 17, 2025, the US Senate passed the massive \$901 billion National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026. The bipartisan bill funds defense programs, supports Ukraine, addresses industrial base issues, and includes controversial provisions like those related to reproductive healthcare and military family benefits, sending it to the President's desk.

According to NPR, "The bill authorizes significant military spending and implementing major acquisition reforms after the House passed its version earlier in December. With both chambers passing the final conference report, the bill is sent to the President for signature into law, completing the annual defense policy and funding process." The bill faced objections from both Democratic and Republican leadership on the Senate Commerce Committee because it allows military aircraft to obtain a waiver to operate without broadcasting their precise location, as an Army helicopter had done before a midair collision with an airliner in Washington, DC. in January that killed 67 people.

Overall, "the bill represents a compromise between the parties. It implements many of Trump's executive orders and proposals on eliminating diversity and inclusion efforts in the military and grants emergency military powers at the U.S. border with Mexico. It also enhances congressional oversight of the Department of Defense, repeals several years-old war authorizations and seeks to overhaul how the Pentagon purchases weapons as the US tries to outpace China in developing the next generation of military technology." See more on the Defense budget at:

PRESS RELEASE

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces New Office in Lincoln

PUBLISH DATE: November 25, 2025

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced the launch of the Office of the Assistant Chiefs (OAC). Four regional offices have been established with Lincoln, Neb., selected as the location of the new Central Region office.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 25, 2025 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced the launch of the Office of the Assistant Chiefs (OAC) — a strategic realignment designed to modernize regional leadership, strengthen accountability, and put decision-making closer to the producers and partners NRCS serves. Four regional offices have been established with Lincoln, Neb., selected as the location of the new Central Region office.

This new structure replaces the Office of the Regional Conservationists (ORC) and represents a key step in Chief Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt's vision to make NRCS more agile, field-focused, and accountable to America's farmers, ranchers, and private landowners. The OAC structure reduces layers of bureaucracy while enhancing communication, consistency, and decision-making at the regional and state levels. Each Assistant Chief will oversee regional operations and work directly with State Conservationists to ensure consistent, science-based, and producer-driven program delivery.

"This modernization puts leadership where it belongs — in the field, side-by-side with the producers we serve," said Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "We are streamlining operations, improving accountability, and ensuring that every NRCS employee has the tools, support, and leadership they need to deliver conservation results that matter. This is about putting farmers first, cutting bureaucracy, and delivering better outcomes for rural America."

"Good news: the USDA's NRCS Central Regional Hub will now be located in Lincoln. This marks an important step in bringing decision-makers closer to the people they serve. I was proud to push for this placement and look forward to working with the administration to ensure our ag producers and landowners have the tools they need to drive real results for rural Nebraska and America," Senator Deb Fischer said.

This effort reaffirms NRCS's commitment to "Helping People Help the Land" and aligns with the Administration's broader reform agenda and ensures taxpayer resources are managed responsibly, outcomes are measurable, and every NRCS action reinforces its mission to support voluntary, locally led conservation on working lands.

This structure ensures every region has a dedicated leader focused on driving program delivery, strengthening coordination with State Conservationists, and expanding producer access to the tools and resources they need. By placing regional leadership closer to the field, NRCS is reinforcing its commitment to responsive service, communication, and support for farmers, ranchers, and private landowners.

The Central Region includes the following states: Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas.

ARCSE Membership Drive

A Membership Drive is underway for ARCSE. This is a concentrated effort to bring more ARCSE members into our organization. We at ARCSE need your help in the recruiting and retention of ARCSE members.

As you know, retirement is a time to celebrate a lifetime of public service and dedication to conservation and to embrace new opportunities, as well as finding new ways to stay engaged. This is where our organization ARCSE comes in. It's in our Purpose statement "to help members keep in touch with each other and with the NRCS and its activities and to view conservation issues and programs from a non-governmental point of view, so that the members may be better able to assist the conservation effort."

In 2024-2025, our membership drive brought in over 80 new members, with complimentary first-year memberships. For 2025-2026, we're continuing this membership drive effort and plan on rewarding the top recruiter in each region with either a Complimentary Life Membership or a \$200 gift card (if already a Life Member). Incentive will be awarded by June 1, 2026.

Keep in mind, we have two types of ARCSE membership: both regular members and affiliate memberships for those who are still employed at NRCS or in another conservation field. Please consider recruiting potential members before they retire. We at ARCSE strive to maintain our annual membership at affordable rates. If you are interested in a long-term commitment, information on lifetime membership options are available on our website at www.arcse.org. In addition to paying for awards, and other administrative expenses, your membership dues help support a summer intern who assists us with our annual meeting, social media, and special projects.

Paul Benedict gave an excellent overview of the contest during the Board's zoom meeting. Please remind new members to indicate who recruited them. We easily lose track of members when they fail to give us an updated email address.

The group had a brief discussion about the importance of keeping those members who do not use email connected to us. Suggestions include assigning a retiree who will call the member or print out information and deliver it. Asking members to occasionally call and check in is a good idea too, especially at this time of year. It is important for all members to keep their contact information up to date.

Learn more about how to join on our ARCSE website at <https://arcse.org/join/>

ARCSE Musicians' Project

–Bill Ward, CA ARCSE State Representative

Merry Christmas and Happy New year to NRCS Retirees across the Country from California!

For this, my initial California report for the 2026 ARCSE newsletter, I have prepared information I wish to share about the ARCSE sponsored "Musicians Project." My purpose is to share more detail about the Musicians Project, and what it is. The central theme of this Musicians' project is to recognize Musicians who worked for SCS/NRCS and develop biographies for them that would be shared on the ARCSE website.

All information shared here is for the purpose of clarifying some details about the Musicians' Project. I will share more information about the "application Process," what information is contained in the musicians biographies, and the process of final biography development and approval. I will start with the first fundamental question.

- What is the "Musicians' Project?"

The Musicians' Project consists of a Musicians' link on the ARCSE website with links to three different topics or Subject matter. 1. Introduction, 2. Biographies of Musicians who worked with SCS/NRCS. 3. Instructions on how to apply or Join the Musicians group. The end product or objective for all participating Musicians is a final approved biography shared on the ARCSE Website.

- Link to Biographies, Biography content includes:

Life experiences as a Musician, including Instrument or instruments played, early life music history, bands or groups played with, recordings, playing venues and related life experience as a musician.

Other Biography information included in each Biography: Professional Education, any Military Service, Professional experience, both with SCS/NRCS and outside the agency, and any awards Received.

- Link to How to Join, (Action required by Musicians and process)

The link to this topic or subject matter is very important and is where all musicians start the process providing the necessary biography information needed to prepare their biographies. There is a fillable pdf form, "Musician Biography Information" form for each Musician to complete. That completed Musicians' Biography information form is returned to me **Bill Ward** by email at bluegrassbillward@gmail.com.

- The Process of Final Biography Development and Approval

I will forward the completed Musicians Biography information form to **Douglas Toews**, the Musicians' Project editor. Doug will then begin working with each Musician using their completed Musician biography information form to prepare a final biography to be added to the ARCSE Website. Each musician will be able to review and make comments for needed changes on draft biographies that Doug prepares until there is agreement on a final biography that will be uploaded to the ARCSE website.

- Musicians' Project" Originators

A team of 3 Musicians with long careers with SCS/NRCS worked with the ARCSE Governing Board to set up a "Musicians' link" on the ARCSE website: [Musicians – ARCSE](#). These 3 musicians shown below are the "Musicians' Project originators."

Douglas Toews was the “visionary” for this Project. Both **Dennis Clute** and I were honored to work with Doug on the final “Musicians’ Project” Details. The three of us are also very grateful for the full support of the ARCSE Governing Board and approval of our project to recognize our musicians who worked for SCS/NRCS and share their biographies on the ARCSE website.



Douglas Toews *Bill Ward*
Musicians’ Project Editor
Dennis Clute

Biographies for all three of the Musicians’ Project Originators can be viewed by going to the following active link [Musicians’ – ARCSE](#). From there go to “Biographies” which are in alphabetical order.

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:

<https://arcse.org/musicians/>

For new musicians interested in becoming part of this group Just click on the active musician's link in the promotion flyer below, go to the "How to Join" Link, and let's start the process of working on your own personal biography. If you know of any other musicians who worked for SCS/NRCS who might be interested in joining this group of musicians, please share this information with them.

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

If there are any questions on any aspect of the Musicians' Project please Contact Bill Ward by email at bluegrassbillward@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Paul Benedict, Membership Chair

New LifeMembers

Gregory Westfall – Allentown, New Jersey
Jerry Bernard – Stafford, Virginia

New Members

William "Chris" Lee – Evansville, Indiana
Katrina Thompson – York, Pennsylvania
Mike Bzdil – Annapolis, Maryland
Nicole Viars – Morgantown, West Virginia
Mark Goodson – York, Pennsylvania
Susan Spencer – Orient, Ohio
Candy Thomas – Lamoni, Iowa
Cindy Haygood – Cedartown, Georgia
Carl Hutcherson – Wimberley, Texas
Gail Bartok – Hillsborough, New Jersey
Stacy M. Mitchell – Bozeman, Montana
Donald W. Hamer, Sr. – Cape May Court House, New Jersey

REMINDER: 2026 ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES and HARD COPY NEWSLETTER FEES are due Jan. 1st, 2026

ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES Due by January 1 st , 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		

For your convenience ARCSE annual dues and hard copy fees can be paid by credit card via **PayPal**:
<https://arcsecommunications.wordpress.com/renew/>.

Or you can pay by check. Make the check payable to **ARCSE** and mail to: **ARCSE, PO Box 131, Stillwater, OK 74076**

The **annual membership dues** are **\$25/year**, and **hard copy fees** are an additional **\$15/year**. If you are a **Life Member** or are an **Honorary Member** (Member with 5 or more years of paid membership who turned 91 in 2025 or earlier), you do not owe annual dues. Life and Honorary members receiving the printed newsletter in the mail must still pay \$15 for that service. If you have questions about your membership or newsletter status do not hesitate to contact me at soilwarden@verizon.net.

2026 Membership Contest:

Don't forget, the Membership Contest for 2026 is now underway. The person who recruits the most new members in each ARCSE Region will be awarded a lifetime ARCSE membership, or a \$200 gift card if already a life member. If you have any questions about the contest, don't hesitate to email me.

Media Manager Report

–Julie MacSwain

The Importance of Checking Email Carefully: A Message to All ARCSE Members

In recent months, ARCSE board members and association members have received emails from individuals attempting to pose as our board member and media manager, Julie MacSwain. These messages often appear legitimate at first glance because Julie's name is shown as the sender. However, upon closer inspection, the email address behind the name is not her official ARCSE email.

How to Spot a Suspicious Email

If you receive an email that appears to be from Julie, please take a moment to hover your mouse over the sender's name. This will reveal the actual email address used to send the message.

Julie conducts ARCSE business only from this email: juliemacswain@gmail.com

If the message comes from any other address—or if something about the request seems unusual—please treat it with caution.

What Julie Will Not Do

For clarity and protection of our members:

- Julie will not send direct requests for contributions or donations.
- Julie will not ask individual members to join unscheduled meetings.
- Julie will not request phone calls or personal information out of the blue.

If you receive such a message, it is almost certainly fraudulent.

Why This Matters

Email spoofing and impersonation are increasingly common tactics used to gain access to personal information, financial details, or organizational data. ARCSE is committed to protecting the security and trust of our membership community, and your awareness is an essential part of that effort.

What You Should Do

- Do not reply to suspicious emails.
- **Do not click on any links or open attachments from unfamiliar senders.**
- Verify by contacting Julie or any ARCSE board member directly using a known, trusted email address.
- Report suspicious messages so we can alert the membership when needed.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for helping keep our ARCSE community safe and informed.

Editor's note: Other ARCSE members' email addresses have also been used fraudulently. Julie's guidance also applies to these bogus email messages.

Ninety Years Strong —Julie MacSwain

We are the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees—

hands etched with soil, hearts rooted in service.

In 1935, from Dust Bowl ashes, NRCS rose:

***terraces taming slopes, buffers cradling streams,
cover crops stitching earth to sky.***

***Ninety years on, in 2025, we honor the mission—
not with nostalgia, but fierce pride.***

***Every waterway, every contour,
a testament to stewardship that endures.***

***We valued NRCS then; we value it now—
the quiet force that heals the land.***

***Retired, yet rooted,
we cheer the next ninety years of living soil.***

Success Stories of the ACES Program

The United States has a long-standing commitment to conservation, supported by various organizations and initiatives. Among these is the Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Program, which has played significant roles in connecting experienced professionals with ongoing conservation challenges.

On July 22nd, 2024, during the 50th anniversary of ARCSE, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was formalized between ARCSE and the National Experienced Workforce (NEW) Solutions (<https://newsolutions.org/>). The MOU outlines resource-sharing commitments by ARCSE toward achieving common objectives. For more information about this MOU, https://arcse.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/arcse-and-new-solutions-mou-july-2024_final-executed.pdf

The effectiveness of the ACES Program is closely associated with the involvement of ARCSE. The association provides a pool of skilled retirees and supports a service-oriented environment. ARCSE members often join ACES as an extension of their work in conservation.

Through ACES, retired professionals have contributed substantial hours to conservation efforts nationwide. Assignments include technical support for soil and water conservation, mentoring new employees, leading educational workshops, and participating in additional projects.

One notable aspect of the ACES Program is its mentorship initiative. As staff turnover and retirements increase, mentorship supports knowledge transfer and continuity. Retirees work alongside new hires, sharing both technical expertise and professional values.

In summary, the collaboration between ARCSE and the ACES Program emphasizes the ongoing contributions of experienced professionals to conservation and the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer.

CALIFORNIA

Bill Ward, ARCSE Representative

Email: bluegrassbillward@gmail.com

See his earlier report on the ARCSE Musicians' Project.

COLORADO

Jack Carlson, ARCSE Representative

Email: pspicata@gmail.com

Frank Geter and **Jack Carlson** continue to help Colorado State University (CSU), Texas A&M, and collaborators with development, calibration, and validation of the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT+) model for field scale assessments of water, soil carbon, and nutrient balances. The model deployed as a web service currently supports quantification of sustainability metrics by Field-to-Market members and data management partners, and others in the regenerative and sustainable ag sectors. Online model service traffic has been strong since deployment earlier this fall. January will see discussions among multiple modeling groups coordinated by the Soil Carbon Solutions Center at CSU on data integration, facilitating ensemble modeling for reducing uncertainty of modeling results for the agricultural community.

CONNECTICUT, RHODE ISLAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Carl DuPoldt, ARCSE Representative

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Connecticut

Several conservation and environmental events are scheduled for January and February 2026 in Connecticut, including the 2026 Environmental Summit, the Connecticut Compost Conference, various guided hikes, and public meetings.

Wildlife and Connecticut's Changing Landscapes: A talk with Master Wildlife Conservationist Ginny Apple will be held at the Lyme Public Hall on Wednesday, January 14, 2026. - <https://www.lymelandtrust.org/eventshow/changing-landscapes-with-wildlife-biologist-ginny-apple/>

2026 Environmental Summit: This annual event for education and collaboration will bring together advocates, lawmakers, and community members in downtown Hartford (at CT State Community College Capital) on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. - <https://www.conservationeducation.org/summit.html>

20th Annual Winter Festival Event: This event at Burr Pond State Park in Torrington will feature ice fishing, hiking, ice sculptures, live animals, and more, on Saturday, February 7, 2026 (inclement weather date Feb 8). - <https://ctparks.com/events/winter-festival>

Coexisting with Connecticut's Critters: A presentation by Master Wildlife Conservationist Ginny Apple at the Lyme Public Hall on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, about safely coexisting with local wildlife. - <https://www.lymelandtrust.org/eventshow/coexisting-with-connecticuts-critters/>

New Hampshire

A variety of New Hampshire conservation and environmental events are scheduled for January and February 2026, including wildlife tracking workshops, bird surveys, and guided winter hikes. Key organizations like the Harris Center for Conservation Education, UNH Cooperative Extension, and NH Audubon are hosting these activities.

Environmental Studies Institute: Winter Tracking & Sign (Jan 14, 21, 28): A series of classes at the Harris Center to learn to read the winter woods by searching for tracks, trails, and other clues. - <https://harriscenter.org/events/environmental-studies-institute-wildlife-tracking-sign-2/2026-01-14>

Owls of New England (Feb 15): An educational event in Exeter to see various owl and raptor species up close and learn about their habitat and behavior. - <https://www.thewordbarn.com/events/02/15/2026/owls-of-new-england>

Sustainable Living Workshops & Lectures (Ongoing): Prescott Farm Environmental Education Center in Laconia hosts workshops throughout the winter to learn about environmental issues and sustainable practices. - <https://prescottfarm.org>

Rhode Island

A variety of Rhode Island conservation and environmental events are scheduled for January and February 2026, including guided nature walks, a multi-day agriculture conference, and educational programs hosted by organizations such as the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

Intro to Archery - Ladies Night: The Narragansett Bowhunters Club hosts an introductory archery session for women on January 2, 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm.- <https://dem.ri.gov/events/intro-archery-ladies-night>

Regenerative Agriculture Conference: This multi-day conference at the Westerly Armory runs from January 31 to February.

2. - <https://www.oceanchamber.org/events/details/regenerative-agriculture-conference-43509>

Vermont

Several Vermont conservation and environmental events are scheduled for January and February 2026, including nature workshops, conferences, and community science efforts.

A Winter World Nature Journaling Workshop teaches how to observe, draw, and write about nature in colder months, covering tools, techniques, and finding inspiration for year-round journaling, with options ranging from free online prompts (#NatureJournalingDecember) to in-person events at places like the University of Illinois Extension, the Smokey House Center in VT, or online via John Muir Laws' site and the Wild Wonder Foundation. These workshops aim to build habits, connect you to nature, and help you document seasonal changes, even in winter. - <https://vteandenetwork.org/event-6453674>

No-Till & Cover Crop Conference: The Northwest Crops and Soils Program at UVM Extension hosts a conference in South Burlington focusing on sustainable agricultural practices. - <https://www.nofavt.org/events/2026-no-till-cover-crop-conference>

Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) - <https://www.lcbp.org/about-us/how-we-work/meetings/>

INDIANA

Jane Hardesty, ARCSE Representative

Email: dirtlady52@aol.com

Hello Retirees! Whew, what an interesting 2025! We have had retirements, deaths, government shutdown, awesome vacations, new adventures, new grand babies and great grand babies, health issues, and days full of surprises and blessings. I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and healthy 2026. Friends who celebrate together, stay together, and I hope we can all stay in touch this coming year.

The Indiana Conservation Partnership is saddened to share the passing of a dear friend and conservationist **Dr. Gary Steinhardt** (September 13, 1944–December 12, 2025). Gary was a dedicated soil scientist, agronomist, educator, SWCS Fellow, and conservation leader. Professor Steinhardt devoted his career to advancing soil and water conservation and sustainable agricultural practices. As a long-time member of SWCS, he authored numerous articles published in the Society's journal, served on the Board of Directors for nine years, and was twice elected president. He inspired many with his passion for the land and its stewardship, and his contributions to soil mapping, water conservation, and educating future generations of scientists will continue to impact our communities and the environment for years to come.

An SWCS interview with Gary: <https://ow.ly/kxCM50XLFtk>. Obituary: <https://www.fisherfuneralchapel.com/.../Gary-Carl...>

IOWA

Mark Jensen, ARCSE Representative

Email: amjens1@gmail.com

On November 20th we had our retiree Christmas party at the Machine Shed Restaurant in West Des Moines. Forty-four folks enjoyed a great meal and had a fun time visiting and catching up with old friends. The names with the pictures show who attended.



Kay and Dave Breitbach, Herb Wilson, Bob Dayton, Marsha and Jim Ayen, and Don Carrington



Ronda and Jim McIntosh, Dave and Tingting Beck, Paul Miller, Keith Edwards, Dora Guffey, and Dale Bruce



Connie Brent, Marion Stevens, Jerry Stevens, and Lew Brent



Lee and Alice White, Deb Billingsley, Helen Kopitzke, Donita and Roger Link, Greg Townley, and Linda and Dennis Miller



Mark and Ann Jensen, Kathy and Brian Peterson, Charlotte and Lyle Asell, and Richard Rogers



Duane Miller, Randy and Barb Stewart, Jeff Godwin, Mark McCurdy, Alan Lauver, Maralee Sarasio, and Margaret Dysart



Jim Phillips, Kay and Dave Breitbach

Thank you to **Greg Mathis** for the following about his and his wife, Francoise, trip to Ecuador: "My wife, **Francoise**, and I are on our annual December trip to Ecuador to visit our son and family. **Jeremy** works at an American Academy school here in the big coastal city of Guayaquil. His Ecuadoran wife, **Leonala**, also works at the school as the school doctor. Both of our grandkids attend the same school, so there's a mass migration first thing in the mornings to get everyone there. Fortunately, they have most of December off as the school has Christmas break.

While city life here has many similarities to life in Council Bluffs, there certainly are some differences. Ecuador is, of course, on the equator, which makes sunrise and sunset almost the same year round – roughly 6:30. The temperature is also relatively constant at 85 to 90 degrees for a high. Coastal Ecuador has two seasons; August to November is dry and January to April is wet (exceptionally humid). It's amazing how the locals work and function in this heat but they do. Outdoor workers wear jeans and long sleeves and sometimes even hoodies to hide from the direct rays of the sun. Not many wear shorts, except for retired gringos like me.



An iguana greets our arrival at our son's home in Ecuador.



A mother scorpion carrying babies on her back is hanging out on the outside wall of our son's house.



We are at the beach. L to R: Me (Greg Mathis), wife Francoise, son Jeremy with granddaughter (Sienna), grandson Sebastian, and daughter in law Leonela.

In a few days we will be spending time at an Air B&B Ranch Hacienda near the country's highest volcano, Chimborazo. This cattle ranch is noted for its zero carbon emission program – first one in Ecuador. Perhaps you will read about that in the next newsletter. Stay tuned.”

Dennis and Cheryl Pate went on a three-week tour of Australia and New Zealand. Denny said it was a great trip and sent us the following photos.



Cheryl and Dennis Pate resting after a speed boat ride in New Zealand



Dennis and Cheryl Pate on a balloon ride near the Coral Reef in Australia



View of the Sidney Opera House from the motel window



Enjoying fresh green mussels while on the boat. The mussels had been caught during their boat ride.



The New Zealand countryside.

During the past couple of months we have been saddened by the passing of Dennis Peterson and Connie Plumb. Denny was a draftsman in the State Office Design Section for his entire career. Connie was the wife of the late Marion Plumb who was a long time Civil Engineering Technician in Western Iowa.

MAINE

Mary Thompson, ARCSE Representative

Email: mpthom@roadrunner.com

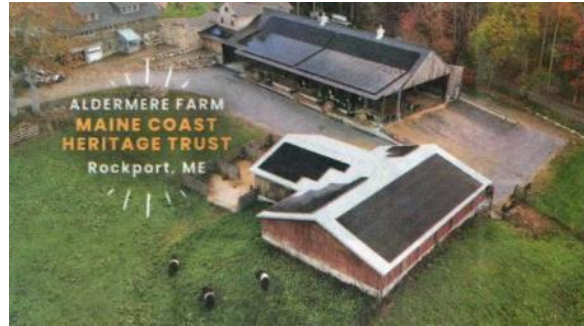
Our breakfasts have become a great time to chat and to check in with those we spent so much time with during our working years. This month I heard from **Skip B. and Phil Christensen**. Both are doing well in the county.



Those of you who remember the old Flood Plain and Insurance days would be interested in hearing that the Town of Union is doing an effort to create "a plan to protect our roads, bridges, and public infrastructure from future storms and flooding." Over the years, after we moved to Union, when there were flood events, I would take photos and send them to **Lew Crosby**. Lew always enjoyed the photos. Recently I was asked by someone in Union if I would have any photos, and I said yes – many, so I sent them off along with a copy of the Flood Plain study that Lew and a YACC crew had worked on in the 80s to show historical data. Interestingly when I went to vote they were handing out a flyer to announce a meeting, and low and behold one of the photos I had taken was on the flyer. It shows that people are still interested in conservation types of things. I imagine that many of us continue to do things for our community where we have our interests. Once a Conservationist, always a Conservationist!

Below is part of an ad that was in the local newspaper. Some of us worked with the Chatfield, now Aldermere, Farm in Rockport over the years. Imagine my surprise to see that they have installed solar panels on the manure storage that **Candi** and I worked on through a State of Maine grant 20 plus years ago! I am sure you all can find the manure storage; it is usually the best looking

building! The barn at the top is a “palace” for the belted Galloway cows. There is even a second story viewing area where visitors can watch the cows. Imagine that!



After Thanksgiving I took the grandchildren and their parents on the “Santa Train” from Unity on the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad. Yes, there was Santa, cookies, and hot chocolate; but for me it was a bit of nostalgia as my father worked for this train in 1941–42 out of Belfast before he enlisted in the US Marine Corps and my mother’s uncle **Walter Bowen** was the general manager for many years. If any of you are train buffs here is the link to the history of the BM&L, <http://cpr.org/Museum/BMLRR/index.html>.

MIDATLANTIC STATES

Terry D’Addio, ARCSE Representative

Email: tmdaddio@aol.com



Cheryl and Scott Delameter

My husband **Scott** and I have been bringing joy for years to Hurlock, Maryland. We start out at the Elementary school in the morning where I read to the children and they talk to Santa. Then it to the Fire House for cookies and activities with the Lion Club and the Fire Company Auxiliary and Volunteers. Then to the parade which is more than 70 cars, floats, bands, and groups. The last event for the day is the tree lighting.

—Cheryl Delamater



Retired SCS State Office Budget and Financial Officer Ruth Carter celebrates her 104th birthday with her son retired NRCS ASTC (Programs) Ken Carter.

MidAtlantic States ARCSE retirees meet at the Bob Evans restaurant in Woodbridge, VA, at 7:30am on the first Tuesday of each month. The following Members met on Nov. 4: **John Moore, Dave Thackeray, and Jerry Bernard.**

From John Peterson: "Broke my right leg again. Bad break. In hospital. Homebound until 25 MAR. Emails will be few."

MISSOURI

Dave Rastorfer, ARCSE Representative

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

The Columbia Area retirees met on November 12th for the quarterly breakfast at JJs in Columbia. Those in attendance were **Karla Lenger, David Gruber, Gail Sallee, Dennis Hoffman, Ed Smith, Larry and Bonnie Pollard, Jerry Edwards, Odie Swanegan, Jean Herman, Frank Gordon, Jack Cronhardt and Dave Rastorfer.** The next Quarterly breakfast will be on the second Wednesday of February (the 11th).

Craig King: Hello to all; It's been a while so here goes.

Our son **Weston** graduated from UCM in Warrensburg in the spring with an Agronomy Degree. He worked two summers at the Warrensburg NRCS Office as a pathway student so started working last January. Well, if you kept up with the journey the pathway students were involved in. Hired, then fired, then hired again. Fast forward, he's getting married January 2nd, 2026 in Hutchison, KS. His fiancé is from that area and has a job there. And yes, he's working in the NRCS Office in Lyons, KS.

Daughter **Candra** is in her second year at Iowa State studying Pre-Med. She just started her indoor track season. She throws The Hammer outside and The Weight indoors. She's enjoying her friends and maturing in front of our eyes.

Andrea is still on her journey with cancer. Had a spot show up in May, so she did a round of radiation. It worked but I believe it irritated her gallbladder. Around July 4th she was in quite a bit of pain. After a couple of ER visits to Hannibal, then a couple of stays at Boone Hospital, things started leveling out, but her menu was thin. Then the medication she was taking was drying out her skin, so that caused irritation. Because of the low immune system, she had Impetigo and staph. After three nights at Boone and her oncologist putting her on Vancomycin, she immediately improved. The next day she was ordering Christmas gifts. Taking a break on one of the meds for the holidays and the wedding. She just got home from a 2.5-day NRCS meeting in Columbia, so it's nice to see her feeling better.

As for me, a year ago I was in The Hotel Barnes. 72 days-worth, ending on February 12th, 2025. But the new heart is working as it should. I got everything out of the old one as I was supposed to. You have to get bad enough to have the proper numbers to be on the transplant list. The energy I have is staggering. I haul corn for the neighbor. That's about every day, then 9–11 hrs/day through harvest. I enjoy it. Keeps me in the Agricultural World. They have 6,000 head of hogs and are working on pelleting their manure and filtering the water for reuse. They run a cow/calf and feedlot program. They do very minimal tillage and are big believers in using rye. I see the results first-hand.

Anyway, God is Good. We appreciate the prayers that were given for us. We feel them. We pray your holidays are filled with happiness and blessings. Be safe!

Mark Nussbaum built a maple syrup shed using post and beam construction with construction material from his farm. He is so happy with the result that he is embarking on a project to build a barn using the same construction method.

NEBRASKA

Norm Kempf, Jim Culver, ARCSE Representatives

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First Friday of the Month NRCS/SCS Retirees Breakfast Club

November 7th Meeting - Jim Harder at the end of the table does an excellent job of keeping everyone informed about the upcoming meetings. Sitting to Jim's right are Mike Kucera, Gerald Montgomery and Dennis Schroeder.

Participating for a good attendance during the November 7th, 2025 First Friday of the Month Retirees' breakfast were **Dennis Schroeder, Harold Klaege, Ed Chmelka, Jim Harder, Mike Kucera, Craig Derickson, Steve Scheinost, Ken Noonan, Jim Culver, Norm Koester, Bill Best, Steve Chick, Gerald Montgomery, Steve Grube and Dave Griffith.**

Our group welcomed **Gerald Montgomery** as this was one of his first visits to our breakfast. Gerald was a Biologist on the Northern Plains Regional oversight team before he retired. Gerald has been a team leader on a good number of excellent fishing trips to Canada over the years. Discussion was quite relaxed and a good time was had by all in attendance.

Participating in the December 5th First Friday of the Month Retirees breakfast were **Jim Harder, Craig Derickson, Steve Scheinost, Jim Culver, Dennis Schroeder, Mark Willoughby, Dave Griffith, Ed Chmelka, Steve Chick, Mike Kucera and Norm Koester.**

One of our members, **Steve Chick** has established a Nebraska NRCS Facebook Group page where we can share updates about what retired and current NRCS/NRD employees are up to. The idea is to keep it positive and so we can stay in touch.

Steve, a retired Nebraska State Conservationist, retained quite a collection of field visit pictures during his 15-year tenure as State Conservationist. Recognizing that NRCS has been through a tumultuous year, Steve thought it might help lift spirits a little bit if he weekly shared some of the pictures of NRCS employees doing what they do best, "Helping People Help the Land." This Facebook site facilitates communication amongst retired, former, and current Nebraska NRCS employees by sharing stories related to the pictures and encourages sharing updates about what's happening in each other's lives/careers. Current/past NRCS employees with ties to Nebraska can join by searching for Nebraska NRCS on Facebook and requesting to join. In addition to Steve's 15 years as Nebraska State Conservationist, his career included time as Deputy State Conservationist (Nebraska), Assistant Conservationist (Colorado), Area Conservationist (North Dakota), and District Conservationist/Soil Conservationist (Illinois). Steve is originally from Maine and was serving as a State Game Warden in Maine when he joined SCS in Illinois in 1978. Steve and Terri now reside in Papillion, NE after living on Lake Fork in East Texas for 13 years.



November 7th Meeting -- Some people waiting for their order to arrive. From left are Steve Scheinost, Steve Chick and Ken Noonan. From the right Ed Chmelka, Bill Best and Norm Kloester.



December 5th meeting – Food has been served and a good time is being had by all.



December 5th Meeting –Sitting to the right of Craig Derickson on the end are Norm Koester and Ed Chmelka. They are having a good discussion about the Bowl opportunities for Nebraska football.

NRCS/SCS RETIREES Nebraska News, December, 2025

The November 19th, meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson **Craig Derickson**. Attending were **Joanne Thiele, Donna Dornbusch, Norm Helzer, Jim Culver, Larry Brown, Steve Scheinost, Gus Dornbusch, Dave Camper, Gary Muckel, Craig Derickson, Thomas Reinsch, and Harold Klaege**.

Doug Christensen, our Chairperson, is on a 30-day trip to Buenos Aires, with stops along the way.

The December 17th meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson **Craig Derickson**. Attending were **Dana Snyder, Thomas Reinsch, Harold Klaege, Jim Culver, Norm Helzer, Mike Kucera, JoAnne Thiele, Steve Scheinost, Larry Brown, Gary Muckel, Craig Derickson, Norman Kempf, Steve Stover, and Donna Dornbusch**.

Craig reported that the zoom meeting on November 7th with Harold Klaege's presentation on the National Association of Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) was very successful. Harold stated that he had received a letter from the office of Nebraska Senator **Deb Fischer** about S624. He will be calling her back to talk about pay raises versus cost of insurance. The new organization of NRCS will be approved by January 31st.

Jim Culver stated that the SWCS Scholarship Committee led by **Craig Romary** met at the Lower Platte South NRD to evaluate 17 scholarship applications to be funded by the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Foundation (NSWCF), Soil and Water conservation Society (SWCS) and the SWCS golf tournament. Scholarships will be awarded to 8 Individuals this year. Three scholarships will be funded by NSWCF, 3 by SWCS funds, and 2 from the annual **Dave Langemeier** golf tournament.

Harold Klaege reported that employees who retired under CSRS do not have to pay NE state taxes on their annuities.

The annual Soil and Water Conservation Service (SWCS) meeting will be held in St. Louis in 2026.

Jim Culver started the "challenge match" at the Nebraska SWCS Dave Langemeier golf tournament this year. Jim donated \$500 and challenged others to match. Funds raised will be used for scholarships.

Dave Camper's wife moved to assisted living at the Yankee Hill Village. **JoAnne Thiele** reported that **Steve Stover** had been dealing with heart issues and had a stint put in but was improving. **Dana Snyder's** wife had triple bypass surgery but is doing well.

JoAnne reported that **Ron Henricks** had died. He had served as the State Conservationist in Nebraska but lived in South Dakota after retiring.

Louie Buller celebrated his 97th birthday. **Sylvia Kempf** celebrated her 84th birthday.

Harold Klaege and his wife celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary.

Comments were made about the University of Nebraska volleyball team and what a great year they had (no losses) before losing in the semifinals to Texas A&M. UNL football quarter-back **Dylan Raiola** will make himself available for the draft. **Emmet Johnson**, the UNL running back, will be going pro and won't be playing in the UNL post season game against Utah. Both the men and women basketball teams at UNL are unbeaten and ranked.

Craig closed the November meeting with quote of the day from **Winston Churchill**: "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity; the optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty."

Harold Klaege reported that he has sent a letter to his state senator on the FERS state tax exemption. He encouraged other retirees to write to their state senators about reinstating the FERS tax exemption from Nebraska taxes.

Nominations are needed for the offices of chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary for 2026. Craig asked for volunteers to be on the committee to work on this.

Steve Scheinost will continue as our treasurer. Doug Christensen is still on a cruise, so we don't know his status for chairperson next year. There is still a vacancy for

The secretary's position is currently filled by Donna Dornbusch. JoAnne Thiele reminded everyone that men can still serve as secretary as they did before women started attending the retirees' meetings.

Before adjourning, Craig wished us all a Merry Christmas. Meeting recorded by **Donna Dornbusch**. Submitted by **Norman Kempf** and **Jim Culver**



Even through this is "Big Red – Nebraska Country" we have two regular members of our group Dave Camper and Harold Klaege who are avid Ohio State fans. They commonly come wearing their Ohio State hat and are not bashful about talking football and Ohio State. Good fun had by all!!



Harold Klaege is proudly wearing his Ohio State cap. Harold and Dave Camper are loyal OSU supporters, even though they have lived in the Nebraska Big Red landscape for many years.



Excellent discussion during our November meeting. Left to right – Thomas Reinsch, Larry Brown, Steve Scheinost, Dornbusch, Dave Camper, Gray Muckle, Harold Klaege, and Norm Helzer.



Craig Derickson, our chairman standing is getting our meeting off to a good start. Left to right – Larry Brown, Gary Muckle, Craig Derickson – standing, Norman Kempf, Steve Stover, Donna Dornbusch – our Secretary, Dana Snyder and Thomas Reionsch.



Left to right – Norm Helzer and Mike Kuceria enjoying an excellent breakfast and some quality discussion about the Nebraska volleyball team. Norm and his wife, Linda, seldom – if ever, miss a home Nebraska Volleyball game.

NEW JERSEY

Nancy Paolini, ARCSE Representative

Email: npaolini@comcast.net

Happy Holidays



Retirees were again invited to join NJ NRCS employees for their annual Holiday Gathering. From left to right are Evan Madlinger, (State Resource Conservationist), Coleen Churchill (retired), Dave Schaaf, (Natural Resources Planning Specialist), Ken Taaffe, (retired), Nancy Paolini (retired) Hilary Trotman Lane, (State Conservation Engineer) Gail Bartok, (retired), Jacob Bailey (Public Affairs Specialist). There were many others at the event but they disappeared before the photo. Something about getting back to work. Poor things.



Visit from Florida: On Nov. 21st 2025 Janice Reid alerted a few of us that she would be visiting from Florida so we scheduled a lunch date at Hopewell Winery in Pennington, NJ. It was a last minute gathering and we tried to get the word out locally. 9 of us were able to attend and it was a nice gathering with snacks, wines and soft drinks. Mostly retirees but a few working people were able to take some leave to join us. Left to right are **Ronnie Lee Taylor, Lauren Lapczynski, Gail Bartok, Nancy Paolini, Coleen Churchill, Janice Reid, Trish Long and Barb Phillips**. **Christine Hall** arrived late and missed the photo op.

ShayMaria celebrated her 80th birthday this past June at her new home in Monroe Twp, NJ. She retired several years ago from NRCS where she worked on the NRI and Cultural Resources Projects. After leaving NRCS she continued her part-time work teaching Geology at Middlesex County College. Now fully retired, she spends her days enjoying various craft projects, sewing quilts, painting, and learning to play the mandolin. She also adopted two adult shelter cats. Don't we all wish we had her energy. Seen here with friend, Nancy Paolini at right.



Happy Birthday to ShayMaria Silvestri.

NORTH CAROLINA

James Canterbury, ARCSE Representative

Email: jhcanter@bellsouth.net

Ten retirees from the Raleigh area met at the NC Farmers Market Restaurant for breakfast on November 5th. Attending the breakfast were **Jim Canterbury, Frank Evans, Dick Fowler, Dick Gallo**. Also attending were **John Kelly, Duncan McGregor, Horace Smith, Mike Sugg, Phil Tant and Greg Walker**.



North Carolina Retirees

OKLAHOMA

Randy Freeland, ARCSE Representative

Email: freelandrandy50@gmail.com

The Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees met at the Golden Corral Buffet Restaurant in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on October 3rd, 2025. Twenty-five people were in attendance (21 retirees and 4 guests/spouses). They were: **Don Bartolina, Steve Chessmore, Wayne Fjeseth, Fred Fortney, Dennis Fowler, Joey Freeland, Bonnie and Randy Freeland, Larry Frey, Harry Fritzler, Sandra and Terry Hough, Jeanne Jasper, Nick Lambeth, Lanny Miller, George Moreland and Betty Gilbert, Kevin Norton, Phil Perryman, Dan Runnels, Jim Smith, Gary Soderstrom, Ed Stinchcomb, Angela Williams, and Jamey Wood**. (Pictures on the website).



Oklahoma Retirees

Vice-President **Ed Stinchcomb** called the meeting to order. He welcomed everyone to the meeting. **Fred Fortney** provided the blessing for the meal, and everyone enjoyed the buffet meal.

Following the meal, first time retirees attending the meeting were asked to introduce themselves: **Angela Williams, Larry Frey, Gary Soderstrom, and Joey Freeland**. Each provided a brief introduction of themselves, many of whom had been retired a number of years. Others in attendance introduced themselves and spouse or guest and told the group how long they had been retired and how many years of service they had upon retirement.

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.) with at least one sentence. This information is used for the Oklahoma Retired SCS/NRCS Employees Association newsletter along with the minutes of and attendees at the meeting. Our website www.joepad.com is used by those not able to attend the meetings. The website provides pictures, list of attendees, etc. Joey Freeland, retired Construction Engineer, keeps the website updated after each meeting. We were able to thank Joey in person today.

Sixty notices continue to be mailed to those who wish to receive a notice through the mail. Retirees should email Randy Freeland randy.freeland@suddenlink.net to request an email meeting notice in lieu of a mailed meeting notice and to report a change in mailing address or email address. Those who may not be receiving a mailed notice and wish to, should email **Sandra Hough** tshough@sbcglobal.net or send a note to her at 1308 Littell Ave., Clinton, OK 73601.

Secretary-Treasurer Sandra Hough read the list of known retirees who have passed since April 2025: **Ed Kephart**, 76, Assistant State Conservationist (among other duties), Norman, 27 yrs. Federal Service, retired in 2006, worked for NRCS in Oklahoma 1979-1989 and 1995-2004, passed 5/16/25; **George Moore**, 73, Oklahoma Conservation Commission Watershed Technician, 33 yrs service, Clinton, "the video pipe inspection expert" passed 5/27/25; **Berry "Ted" Kuntz**, 84, Economist on Water Resources Staff, 40+ yrs service, retired in 2010, passed 6/1/25; **Gayle Goforth**, 91, Construction Inspector Perry WO, 38 yrs service, retired in 1993, passed 7/4/25; **Carol Crouch**, 74, State Tribal Liaison for past 18 years, 40 yrs service, passed 7/10/25; **Elizabeth "Liz Greer" Konigmacher**, 92, worked in State Office Stillwater, passed 7/26/25; **Jimmy (Jim) Brewer**, 86, Civil Engineering Technician on Duncan AO & Watershed Office Staff, 37 yrs service, passed 8/19/25; **Duane Crider**, 76, DC @ El Reno for 30 yrs, retired 2010, 38 yrs service, passed 9/9/25; **Bobby Gene Bourlier**, 93, Soil Scientist, Norman, retired in 1994 with 39 yrs service, worked in New Mexico, Pawhuska & Norman, passed 9/11/25; **June Willis**, 94, widow of **Roland Willis**, retired State Conservationist (1972-1987), passed 10/2/25; and **Juanita Eeds**, 83, wife of **Baker Eeds**, retired Resource Engineer, Clinton Area Office, passed 10/13/25. A moment of silence was observed in their memory. There were no known retirements since April 2025.

Jeanne Jasper, Oklahoma State Conservationist, was asked to introduce herself and provide information about her. Jeanne has 28 years of service with the last two years in Oklahoma. Montana is her home state. She was raised in rural Montana and has found a home in Carney, OK on a few acres. She is planning a trip to Alaska with her dad in late spring.

She provided an insight into the Government shutdown. There are a handful of employees working primarily in watersheds, as there are a number of active projects. Student interns were not hired. Active employee numbers are down from 280 to 206. Many employees applied for the deferred retirement program offered or left for other employment opportunities. The staff is still passionate about their work objective, as well as customers being patient with the staff available. The state was restructured by teams so there is an average of three offices per team instead of four offices. Twelve of the 26 team leaders are acting. Lots of staff has less than five years service. She encouraged employees to attend the 90th Anniversary Celebration of the Soil Conservation Service this past April. She thought it was beneficial for them to see how passionate retirees are and the importance of what they bring to the State of Oklahoma in the activities they do day to day. Still waiting to see what happens with the Government shutdown. Budget doesn't appear to increase.

Several retirees voiced suggestions to **Jeanne Jasper** about how to get employees exposed to retirees who are willing to share their work experiences by inviting the retirees to meetings throughout the year. Zone meetings are typically held every two years; end of year meeting in Stillwater; OACD meetings with District Conservationists in attendance; and the Annual OACD Meeting to be held in March at OKANA.

Some of the replies to the editor about their retirement activities are as follow:

Harry Fritzler said for the last two years and coming up again this next year, we have spent time in Moab, UT with an RV Club that are also Jeep Wrangler owners doing off-roading on various trails around Moab. It just so happens to fall the same week as our retirees gathering in OKC. That's why I've missed those gatherings. Also, in May/June of 2026 we've signed up with the same RV Club to traverse Route 66 from end to end. Next year is the 100th anniversary of the "Mother Road." Should be fun. We also try to make it to Colorado at least once a year, sometimes twice a year, to play in the mountains with the Jeep and enjoy the cool weather. During the summer we try to make it down to Lake Eufaula three or four times.

When we are home, we spend as much time as possible going to grandkids' sports events. They are involved in baseball, football, soccer, and basketball. Keeps us hopping. The ranch keeps us extremely busy now that I've gotten into the sheep and goat business along with the cattle. It has definitely been a learning curve adventure.

Jim Smith shared his experiences: Last summer we went on a big road trip. We drove to Arizona. Visited Painted Desert/Petrified Forest National Parks on the way to Page, AZ. At Page, we toured the slot canyons and Horseshoe Bend just below Glen Canyon Dam. From Page, we drove to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. We then went north to Zion and Brice Canyon National Parks. Then up to Moab, Utah via a scenic drive and visited Arches National Park. This fall we are driving to Mount Rushmore, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Parks. Have traveled to Alaska three times since retirement. Once on a cruise, the other two on fishing trips. Living the dream as they say.

Carolyn and Bob Webb sent this: Thanks for the invite but Bob and I won't be there. Stepped out of closet and my knee popped so loudly. Dr. did Xray and sending me to orthopedic Dr. in Tulsa in the am. Home with knee wrap, wheelchair, and pain pills. We ran the 5K again in May (picture below). Since turning 86 tomorrow, we both just walked fast and made it in under an hour. Please tell everyone hi and sorry we will miss you all. It was a nice birthday present you planned for me tomorrow.

(Insert picture of Carolyn: We recently learned that former Oklahoma NRCS Employee, **Becky Ross**, has retired from the State Conservationist position in New Hampshire. Following is a note from her: The address I am using for people to mail in their ARCSE dues is Stillwater. We are in the process of relocating to Texas from New Hampshire, so my cousin in Stillwater is helping out with the PO Box until we get settled in TX. Currently we are working on month four of living full time in our RV and have been traveling across the US. I am writing this email from Melbourne, FL. Even though I won't be officially part of the OK group, I would love to be on the list, and if I can make it up to a meeting, I certainly would love to catch up with you and others that I worked with. The best email for me is dirtlady71@gmail.com.— Becky Ross, ARCSE Treasurer

Others were: **Wayne Fjeseth** said he is going to Minnesota to fish soon, and still visiting grandkids and running errands. **Don Bartolina** had 41 years of service with SCS/NRCS and four years with OACD. Has served 10 years on the Oklahoma County Conservation District Board. He has 10 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren (three in 2025). **Jamey Wood** coordinated the USDA/NRCS Golf Tournament this fall. NRCS participants were: **A. J. Kennedy, Arvil Bass, Brian Dillard, Darol Wilson, David Hungerford, Gilbert Guerrero, John Mustain, Scott Pace, Steve Alspach, Steve Elsener, Steve Glasgow, Terrell Howard, and Troy Collier.**



Carolyn and Bob Webb at golf tournament

Phil Perryman has recently moved to Ninneka to enjoy grandkids activities. Lester Brockmann can't come to our meetings anymore but enjoys reading the newsletter and looking at pictures on the website. He said he had a pickup accident a couple of years ago that required neck and back surgery and now his sons don't think he should be driving to the city anymore.

Please feel free to send something similar to those above that can be used in the April 2026 Newsletter. Do it now before you forget! Send it to: randy.freeland@suddenlink.net

Phil Perryman reported to the group that he had talked to **Earl Weisner's** wife to see if Earl was up to coming to the meeting. Earl previously suffered a stroke and has been doing rehab. She advised that he was not up to it at this time but would begin some additional rehab soon. Earl's address is 5885 S. 2nd St. Duncan, OK 73533, if you would like to send him a note or card.

The group was also reminded via email that **Jim Williams**, retired DC from Ardmore, was dealing with ALS. We were encouraged to send him texts or cards, but he isn't able to speak on the phone. His cell phone number is (580) 465-8258.

Several attended "A Celebration of the 90th Anniversary of the Soil Conservation Service" on Monday, April 28th, 2025, in El Reno at the Canadian County Expo Center. The group wants to have **Sam Stalcup** come to a future meeting to talk about this and his experiences as Historian in the National NRCS Office.

Randy reminded the group again that if they are Civil Service retirees and have not checked with Social Security about drawing a retirement based on their spouse, they should do so as soon as possible. Several have financially benefitted from a call or visit with Social Security.

Many of us knew and worked closely with **Bill Littlefield**, a former Assistant State Conservationist for Programs in Oklahoma. He is retired and has lived in Stillwater for the last several years but has relocated to Florida to be closer to his daughter. If you would like to reach out to Bill you can mail him at 5521 San Luis Dr. North, Fort Myers, FL 33903.

The group was reminded of Duane Crider's Memorial Service this coming Saturday in El Reno.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 23, 2026, at the Golden Corral on MacArthur Boulevard in Oklahoma City. The Golden Corral opens at 10:30am, so there is extra time for visiting before the meeting starts at 11:30am.

PENNSYLVANIA

ARCSE Representative: Currently vacant

Harrisburg State Office retirees met for our bi-monthly breakfast on Dec 09. Merry Christmas! Tim Murphy, PA Bugle Editor



Attending, left to right, were **Rich Shockey**, **Hosea Latshaw**, **Bob Heidecker**, **Dave (ring leader) Faerber**, **John Featherman**, **Barry Isaacs**, **Jeff Mahood**, **Alan Wood**, **Pete Vanderstappen**, and **Tim Murphy**.

TENNESSEE

The meeting was held at the Golden Corral in Cookeville. In attendance were: The retirees met at Shoney's in Lebanon on December 11, 2025. In attendance were:

Patty Lane, **Gary Handley**, **Andy Neal**, **Bobby Moore**, **Larry and Connie Hasty**, **Allen and Laura Persinger**, **Mike Hart**, **Darwin Newton**, **James Sims**, **Jana Sims**, **Kevin Brown**, **Grace Lutz**, **AnnSue Wattenbarger**, **Pamela Hoskins**, **Nancy Harris**, **Traci Horne**, Notes from those unable to attend.

Larry Blick would love to be here but is unable to travel very far due to his caregiver status for Barb. **Dimple Geesling** is in Colorado visiting grandkids and great-grandkids. She says Hi and Merry Christmas to everyone. **Faye Floyd** says to tell everyone Hi and Merry Christmas.

Debbie Brasfield had planned to attend but had HVAC issues. **Anna Chidester** is in Pigeon Forge celebrating her birthday. **Allen Crowe** is attending two graduations for his granddaughters—one in Cookeville and one in Knoxville—both on the same day



Tennessee Retirees

Notes from the meeting:

James Sims is still working the ACES program. He has several projects ongoing, including some in Waverly, Jamestown, and Oneida. His daughter **Jana** joined us for lunch on her way to Knoxville.

Nancy Harris retired effective 9/30/25. She is enjoying retirement and staying busy doing lots of landscaping, keeping her grandkids, planning her daughter's wedding next spring, and is ready for Christmas.

Andy Neal is working on his bucket list. He has completed a mile now on the Appalachian Trail. (his comment, not mine!) He has had a cancer scare but he is doing OK. He is celebrating his 40th wedding anniversary by going to Italy and Greece. He is going to Ireland in April. He is enjoying travel and kids and grandkids.

Kevin Brown is 73 years young today, Happy Birthday to Kevin! He recently spent 15 days in Italy on a wonderful trip. He joined the Navy when he was younger hoping to see the world but only got to see Cuba back then. He enjoys teaching about soils for the master gardener program and babysitting.

Darwin Newton retired 20 years ago and since then has worked 15 years at Western Kentucky University and was on the board of directors for a community bank. He does private consulting and is still trying to retire from that. He has travelled worldwide taking two Mediterranean cruises, river cruises all over Europe, trips to Israel, all 50 states and is trying to get to all the National Parks. He has also been awarded several National awards for his conservation work!

Grace Lutz recently retired on 9/30/25 and is still waiting for her retirement to process through OPM. Her daughter was married in May to a Marine, and they are currently living in Quantico, VA. Her son is working here in Nashville. She has upcoming trips planned to Montana, Hawaii, and Florida.

Mike Hart has been retired for 9 years now. His 50th wedding anniversary is coming up. He spends time taking care of family. He is headed to Australia in March to visit his son who lives there, and to attend his son's wedding. He bought a lot several years ago in North Georgia near Brasstown Bald. They have an RV and love spending time there.

Bobby Moore left the service in Tennessee 35 years ago. His wife recently passed away in September. He struggles with his hearing and memory.

Larry Hasty spends a lot of time at doctor appointments and has back surgery planned on New Year's Eve, hoping to get off the pain medicine he has been on for several years now. He has 12 grandkids, 6 great-grands. He fought cancer three years ago, but there is no sign of it anymore! He is on the planning commission, SCD board, is active in church work, and still has farms and cattle. He retired 19 years ago.

Gary Handley enjoys hanging out on his 10 acres; he has gotten two deer so far, and the freezers are full. He is doing well medically, is dating and having fun.

AnnSue Wattenbarger retired 10 years ago. She has carpal tunnel syndrome and is finishing up physical therapy to help with that. She does yoga and takes care of her 20-year-old house. She has renovated her yard this year, which has a lot of trees. She enjoys her 15-year-old cat, and she stays busy.

Laura Persinger is a recent retiree. She started out as a contractor with NRCS and was hired as a Federal employee in 2015. She worked on WRP and has worked remotely for National Headquarters for the last few years. She is married to **Allen**. She has been restoring a 100-year-old Tudor house near the old Lebanon hospital. She has decided to get her contractor's license.

Pamela Hoskins retired 1½ years ago and lives in Cookeville on the family farm, along with her daughter, son-in-law, and her grandson. She does a lot of fencing, caring for lots of chickens, goats, sheep, and cows. She would like to travel some in the future, but for now enjoys working on the farm. Her son lives in the Murfreesboro area. She is enjoying retirement. Life is good.

Allen Persinger recently took a road trip to Boulder City with Laura to visit their daughter in Nevada. He bought a Ford Bronco last year and took it to a Bronco Rodeo in Nevada while he was there.

Patty Lane has been retired now for 15 years. She recently went to Branson, Missouri with **Faye Floyed, Nancy Harris** and **Traci Horne**. Took in several shows, did some shopping and dining and enjoyed relaxing in the house that they rented. On December 1st she was blessed with the birth of her first GIRL great-grandchild. She has had several boy greats, but this is the first girl!

Traci Horne has had a bit of a tough year in that her Dad passed away, and her Mom has been diagnosed with cancer. She enjoyed the trip to Branson and is looking forward to Christmas in Tampa with her Mom, brother, sister, and nieces. Still working for the ACES program.

Notice to those on civil service retirement:

In case you have not heard, the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) were **repealed** in January 2025. What this means is that the penalty that reduced social security benefits to those who earned enough credits AND/OR drawing off of a spouse's social security **are no longer being penalized. Please check with Social Security to see if you qualify.** Several people who had never been able to draw before are now able to!

Our next meeting will be in Lebanon on March 19th, 2026, so save the date! – Traci

TEXAS

Mike Bogard, ARCSE Representative

Email: mbogard41@gmail.com

–Charles Melton wrote for **Michael Bogart**:



The Fort Worth NRCS Alumni Club met on Tuesday, December 9th at Prima Pizza and Pasta in Fort Worth, TX. There were 21 in attendance including Dale and Joe Bergeron, Mark Boyson, David Buland, Dave Drennan, Clyde Goodman, Rafael Guerrero, John

Haberer, Mike Kortum, Willeene and Arnold King, Maxine and Burnie Owen, Marsha Reed, Carol and Jim Robinson, Douglas Seibel, Dave Stockbridge, Phillis and Billy Teels and Ken Twitty.

This was the biggest group we have had in recent years. The next gathering is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10 at Noon. Thanks,

–**Douglas Seibel**

“This isn’t fit for publication, but if you’re in the hospital and the bed has an alarm on it, there is a way to get your clothes on without setting off the alarm. They put a stent in my heart on Monday before Thanksgiving. (My widow-maker artery was 99% blocked.) They didn’t let me have a shower on Monday or Tuesday. Finally, they did Wednesday morning after they said they were going to release me. When I got out of the shower I sat down on the side of the bed before I realized that the nurse had reset the alarm.

A friend was there to take me home and took this picture just before the nurse walked in. She wasn’t too happy and told me to get down. So I jumped off onto the floor. That wasn’t what she wanted me to do. Doing well now except for the rehab. The nurses in there keep telling me to go slower. They get a little testy at times.”



WEST VIRGINIA

Peg Reese, ARCSE Representative

Email: pegreesev@gmail.com

Shirley Austin of Morgantown, WV passed away on November 4th, 2025. Shirley worked at WVU for 10 years before joining SCS. She worked in the state office for 34 years before retiring in 1994. Shirley was very active with the 4-H and other community groups. More information is available in the “in memoriam” section of this newsletter.

“What are you going to do when you retire? That was the question on my mind as I neared retirement age for Federal Employees. I was attending an NRCS staff meeting when an argument ensued about how much copy paper our service centers were wasting. We were working hard to get all our soil surveys digitized, and I had to sit there and listen to a debate about copy paper. Well, retirement started to look good. Later that year, I was talking to **Bill Grafton** (WVUES Forester), and he asked me to consider creating a soils curriculum for his Master Naturalist program.

When I retired from the NRCS in January 2011, my wife **Rosalie** saw a newspaper ad about the Master Naturalist class offered on Monongalia County. During 2012, Rosalie was on sabbatical, and to help her better appreciate nature, we started attending the Master Naturalist Program. As Bill Grafton had requested, I prepared a soils curriculum for the chapter with Rosalie’s help. We concentrated on the state soil and the seven soil orders in the USA.

Rosalie had a head start as she had been presenting soil science to elementary school children through a series of science “exploratories” at our kid’s school, Suncrest and North Elementary. All of Rosalie’s students knew that Monongahela was our state soil and made mini profiles using coin bottles.

The adults in the Master Naturalist program also enjoyed making a soil profile, taking a fun quiz identifying the 7 soil orders of WV, and receiving a poster of the WV State Soil: Monongahela Silt Loam. Although soils is an elective, other chapters have requested us to present the program. This has been a good experience for us, and we have presented the soils curriculum to master naturalists for 13 years.

The nice part about the Master Naturalist program is that you can take required and elective classes at your own pace. It took us about two years to complete the program to become master naturalists.

What are your plans for retirement? I hope you can spend time outdoors enjoying nature. Consider joining the Master Naturalist program in your area. You might be surprised who you meet in the class and of course, you don’t want to miss the soils class.”

–In Soils, Steve and Rosalie Carpenter.

WISCONSIN

Deb Legear, ARCSE Representative

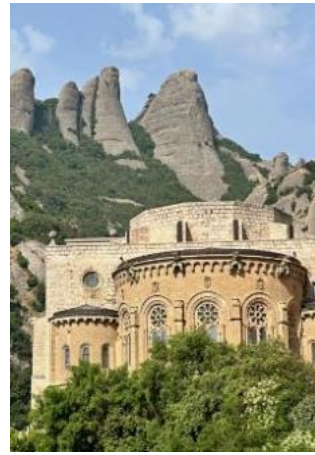
Email: deb.legear@gmail.com

Submitted by Deb LeGear:

I traveled to Spain and Portugal with family this past June. We were in Madrid, Segovia, and Barcelona, Spain, then flew to Lisbon, Portugal. I toured palaces, cathedrals, art museums and cities with fabulous architecture, beautiful gardens and statues in center squares. It was a wonderful experience, and I wanted to share a few of my favorite photos.



Aqueduct of Segovia, Spain – Built around the 1st century AD to bring water to the city from a nearby spring. It supplied water until 1973.



Montserrat Monastery and Basilica outside Barcelona



Sagrada Família – Cathedral of Barcelona, Spain



Garden and Palace northwest of Madrid, Spain



Royal Palace of Madrid, Spain

Retirees, another year comes to a close for Wisconsin retirees. There were several luncheons throughout the state this year in Richland Center, Eau Claire, Green Lake, Shawano, Plover, and Verona.

I will send out a schedule of dates and locations as soon as I get the information from the area representatives. I hope to see new faces next year. If you know of new retirees, please give them my email address so I can add them to the email list.

I am requesting stories of any volunteer activities, special travel experiences or interesting conservation activities going on in Wisconsin for the next newsletter. Please include photos. Attach the photos separately to the email. Send your story as soon as you want but no later than February 16, 2026.

I recently received word that retired District Conservationist, **Sam Skemp**, of the Viroqua Service Center has passed away. See the In Memorium section for more details.

I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

–Deb LeGear

A Legacy of Service

–Julie MacSwain

*With grateful hearts, we say thank you
To ARCSE members, NRCS retirees,
Friends and conservation partners too*

*For 90 years, NRCS has served our nation
Caring for soil, water, farms, and fields—
Guided by purpose, strengthened by service.*

*Your legacy lives on in the land,
In every acre protected, every life touched
A gift of stewardship, faithfully given.*

Thank you for serving—then and now

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.

SENIOR CONSERVATIONIST CHRONICLE

Senior Conservationist

Michael “Mike” Schendel

Michael Schendel was born 10/07/1938 in Menomonie, WI.

Mike’s contact information: 1320 12th Ave. E, #108. Menomonie, WI 54751; 715-556-5098, (Cell) 715-556-2570; e-mail, smschend@gmail.com.

He earned his BS in Civil Engineering at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI in 1961. He also earned his M.B.A. (Executive Master in Business Administration Program at the University of Illinois, Champaign, IL in 1983. He married Sally (Weiss) Schendel June 15, 1961. He has two daughters: Krista Sunderland (Bill) and Angela Richardson (John). He has grandchildren, Sara and Gloria Sunderland; and Sophie, Emma and William Richardson.

During UW Summer Breaks, Mike worked for the Wisconsin Highway Commission out of the Eau Claire office. This was one of the first major areas of Interstate 94 work in Wisconsin. He worked three summers doing alignment layout work and construction inspection, including layout of I-94 Bridges over the Red Cedar River in Menomonie and running density compaction tests, setting slope stakes, and center alignment stakes.

Career Positions with SCS-NRCS

GS-5/7: Area Office, LaCrosse, WI; from 1961 to 1966 (Design, Layout, Construction)

GS-9-11: Construction Office, Field Office, Richland Center, WI; from 1966-1973

GS-12: State Construction Engineer, Champaign, IL; from 1973-1978

GS-13: State Conservation Engineer, Champaign, IL; from 1978-1983

GS-14: Assistant State Conservationist (Water Resources); Des Moines, Iowa from 1983-1988

GS-15: Assistant Director, Midwest NTC and Head of Engineering Staff for 12 Midwest States in Lincoln; NE from 1988-1994

He retired in 1994 as Assistant Director of the Midwest NTC, and Head of the Engineering Staff (12 positions, engineers and geologist) serving the 12 Midwest States, Lincoln, NE.

Honors Received During Career

Several “Outstanding Performance Awards” over the years.

1988 Honorary Member of Iowa Association of Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners, presented Nov. 29, 1988

1991 Engineer of the Year for the Midwest National Technical Center

1991 Certificate of Appreciation awarded for “1991 Engineer of the Year for the Midwest National Technical Center.”

1994 Certificate of appreciation from Gus Dornbusch, Director of the NTC, as "Assistant Director in recognition of outstanding leadership in providing engineering support to the Midwest NTC and the Midwest states and ensuring the high standards and high quality work, enabling the Midwest NTC to take the lead in many areas of engineering throughout SCS."

After retirement Mike and Sally returned to Menomonie, WI to continue their family work in managing their 480 acres of "Schendel Family Timberland," all of which is enrolled in the Wisconsin State DNR Managed Forest Law Program. The Schendel family has planted over 240 acres of red pine seedlings.

They were involved in the development of a Senior Independent Living facility in Menomonie. Four years of work and satisfying friendships produced "The Oaks Senior Independent Living Facility" on a beautiful 14-acre wooded site, with 36 apartments, enclosed parking, with wooded trails and gardens. For this volunteer work, Mike received the Chamber of Commerce "Good Neighbor Award" in 1999.

Mike and Sally are members of the "Red Cedar Classic Auto Club," and participate in parades and shows with our fully restored 1949 Studebaker 4-door sedan. "It's a fun group and we enjoy the camaraderie!"

Sally and Mike celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary in 2010 with an Open House at their home in Menomonie, with U.W. Stout-catered food and a four-piece combo for entertainment. It was a fun and memorable time for everyone! (This year was their 65th Anniversary in June.

"My health is good."

Mike and Sally were organizers of a Biking group from their church about 15 years ago. We have great biking trails along the Red Cedar and Chippewa Rivers. Mike's brother, Rich, and he enjoyed many annual canoeing adventures in the Boundary Waters and Quetico Provincial Park. In later years their wives joined them for continuing canoeing adventures!

Mike served on the Menomonie Public Library Foundation Board for six years as member and Board President. And he was a member of the Menomonie Urban Forestry Board from 2012 to 2024.

Mike earned his Eagle Scout Award in 1955 from Post 23, Menomonie, Wisconsin. He is also a Life Member of The National Eagle Scout Association. He's been a member of NARFE, Chapter 371, for over 20 years and qualifies as a Distinguished Member.

OBITUARY INFORMATION

Paul Benedict, Membership Chair

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

Surname	Year	<i>In-Memoriam</i> (Note: These are recent notices. For a complete list, please see www.arcse.org)
Adams	2025	Senior Conservationist and Honorary Member John Widner Adams (97) of Lyons, Georgia, passed away July 7, 2025, at his home in Lyons. John was born May 8, 1928, in Carrollton, Georgia, to Isaac Olin Adams and Mary Carolyn Widner Adams. He attended Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia, and played catcher on the baseball team. He transferred to the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, to complete his bachelor's degree in agronomy in 1950. Much to the dismay of his family, John was drafted into the United States Army in 1951. The Adams Family had already sacrificed one of their seven sons in service to the country – and there were five Adams sons concurrently serving in World War II. John and his battalion were captured by the Chinese in North Korea and held as Prisoners of War. John was released in August 1953 after 27 months of captivity, when the armistice was signed. Upon his return to the US and to his hometown of Carrollton, the city celebrated with a parade in his honor and awarded him keys to a brand new 1953 Ford sedan. He and Faye Davenport of Buchanan, Georgia, were married in First Baptist Church of Atlanta on June 6, 1954. John worked his career for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. He retired as the District Conservationist in Lyons, Georgia, in 1994. John was a big volunteer in his community providing many hours of service to the Recreation Department, the Jaycees, the Lions Club and First Baptist Church of Lyons. When his beloved Faye's health began to suffer in 2010, and her level of needed care became such that she moved to assisted living, John was with her morning, noon, and night. Faye passed away in 2016. John loved to fish, hunt and garden and loved sharing his bounty. John is survived by his children Janet, Mark, and Alan; and many grandchildren and great grandchildren.
Austin	2025	Shirley R. Austin (90) of Morgantown, West Virginia, passed away on November 4, 2025, surrounded by her loving family. She was born in Morgantown on January 12, 1935, a daughter of the late Ernest R. "Vic" and Nelle Shahan Reckart. She graduated from Morgantown High School in 1952, and Morgantown Business College in 1954. She worked for 10 years at West Virginia University, and 34 years from the USDA-Soil Conservation Service where she worked as a secretary. She retired in 1994. She loved camping with her family and friends, reading, needlework, and being with her grandchildren and family. She attended Goshen Baptist Church. She was a 4-H leader for 10 years and is a life member of the 4-H all stars. She served as secretary treasurer of the Monongalia County 4-H Foundation. She was a 68-year-member of the community education outreach services (CEOS). This was originally the farm women's club. She served on the Monongalia County council as Vice president 2 years, and council president for 4 years. She served as an elected member of the state council for 2 years. She served on educational committees in both the state and county. She was chosen outstanding club member in 1999–2002. She was preceded in death by her husband of 43 years, J. Dale Austin who died on January 10, 1999, her grandson Jacob Wood who died July 24, 2012. She is survived by her two children, Bonnie (Richard) Wood and their children, Jacob and Morgan Wood and her daughter America; Jeffrey (Cherie) Austin and their children, Katie and Elizabeth (Philip) Olivier and their sons, Parker and Elliot.
Bollman	2025	Senior Conservationist and Honorary Member Robert Verne "Bob" Bollman (98) of Greencastle, Indiana, passed away October 27, 2025, after suffering a fall the week before. Robert was born December 30th, 1927, to Cargile and

		Mable (Wilcox) Bollman at their farmhouse near Bloomfield, Iowa. He obtained a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Iowa State University and a Master of Science in Agronomy from Purdue University. Bob married the love of his life, Carolyn "Jane" Whitsel on June 2nd, 1956. She passed away in 2018. He was employed by the USDA-Soil Conservation Service for thirty-five years, fifteen in Iowa and twenty in Indiana. He retired in 1986 from the position of Deputy State Conservationist in Indiana. Bob had a deep love of soil and water conservation districts. He worked with Bob Eddleman, Charlie McKee and others to establish a firm foundation for the Indiana Conservation Partnership. He also worked four years for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources where he served as director of the State's Division of Soil Conservation. Bob was a fellow of the Soil Conservation Society of America and designated a Sagamore of the Wabash by Governor Robert D. Orr. He had served as an elder at Whitestone Christian Church and at Northview Christian Church. He was devoted to family, friends and his profession, which he described as "taking care of our God given natural resources." Survivors include his daughter, Mary Houser of Danville, Indiana; sons, Daniel (Karen) Bollman of Fillmore, Indiana, and Thomas Bollman of Greencastle; ten grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren; brothers, Steve Bollman of Manhattan, Kansas and Doran Bollman of Pulaski, Iowa and sister, Phyllis Wise of Oakley, California. In addition to his wife "Jane", he was preceded in death by son Patrick and daughters, Sally and Susan.
Christian	2025	James E. "Jimmy" Christian (76) of Lewisburg, Kentucky, passed away on October 24, 2025, at Med Center Health-Russellville in Russellville, Kentucky. Jimmy was born July 30, 1949, the son of the late Elvis Christian and the late Ruthell Henderson Christian. He was the husband of Sheila Harris Christian of Lewisburg, who survives. He was a proud United States Army Veteran, having honorably served his country during the Vietnam War. Jimmy spent over thirty years as a Soil Conservation Technician for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and was proud to help the farmers of Logan County and the surrounding area. His son Nick is the current District Conservationist in Elkton, Kentucky. He was a faithful member of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, where he spent over twenty years as a Sunday School teacher. In addition to his wife, Jimmy is survived by his daughter, Christie (Travis) Chick of Russellville; two sons, Trevor (Emily) Christian of Lewisburg and Nick (Stephanie) Christian of Lewisburg; three granddaughters, Gracie Christian, Reagan Christian, Whitney Christian; six grandsons, Jordan (Faith) Chick, Peyton Chick, Corbin Chick, Isaac Christian, Blanton Christian, Remington Christian; and two great granddaughters, Laurel Chick and Elaina Chick.
Cole	2025	Helen Annette (Pollard) Cole (92) of Stillwater, Oklahoma, passed away on November 17, 2025. She was the wife of the late Everette L. Cole, who worked as a soil scientist for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. Helen was born September 14, 1933, in Dunlap, New Mexico. She married her High School sweetheart, Everett Lee Cole, on October 6, 1951. Helen worked in banking much of her life. She and Everett lived and worked in Nevada before moving to Oklahoma. She is survived by her children: Debra Field, of Sand Springs, Oklahoma; Ricky and Etheline Cole; Lapu Lapu, Philippines; Kim and Gerry Cole of Stillwater, and Cindra and Bill Smith of Glencoe, Oklahoma; Grandchildren: Patrick Briscoe and Gina Ferrell of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Joshua and Amanda Briscoe, Sand Springs, Kevin and Ki Cole of Morrison, Oklahoma, Angela and John Karr of Bixby, Oklahoma, Will and Rhia Smith Stillwater; Lisa and James Morrow of Glencoe, Oklahoma; Kara and Ashby Kirkendall Morrison, Oklahoma; Joe and Samantha Smith Glencoe, Oklahoma; step-grandson Matt Trigosa, Lapu Lapu, Philippines; Great Grands: Dawsen and Sawyer Briscoe, Jeshurun and Ruthie Cole, Kanade and Liam Smith, Ayden Morrow, Eli and Asher Kirkendall, Isador and Seamus Smith.
Droege	2025	Marcia E. Droege (72) of Wadesville, Indiana, passed away on August 21, 2025, at her home. Marcia was born on November 19, 1952, in St. Johns, Michigan. She was the daughter of the late Michael and Maxine (Miller) Galvach. Marcia worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist. She loved the outdoors and worked with local wildlife officials to help restore the Bald Eagle population at Hovey Lake. She was a longtime member of Zion Lippe United Church of Christ, where she sang in the church choir. Marcia was outgoing and talkative; she enjoyed sewing and made many of her daughter's Halloween and ballet costumes. Surviving Marcia are her daughter, Laura Droege; sisters-in-law, Carol Jo Droege, Rose Hasty and Ruth (Tom) Wintczak; a niece, Christine (Tyler) Watson and nephews, Zane (Stephanie) Galvach, Sam (Leslie) Lawrence and Michael Droege; great nieces and great nephews. Marcia was preceded in death by her husband, Paul Droege in 2018.
Gaskell	2025	Senior Conservationist and Honorary Member Luther James "Jim" Gaskell (97), of Derby, Kansas (formerly of Chanute, Kansas), passed away peacefully on June 10, 2025, at Derby Assisted Living. Jim was born May 25, 1928, near Cameron, Missouri, to Garfield L. and Lorena (Owens) Gaskell. He earned a degree in Agriculture from Kansas State University in 1950. He married Lorraine Piper on August 13, 1950, in Overbrook, Kansas, and they settled on a farm east of Altamont, Kansas. His service to his country included a stint as a Guided Missile Repairman in the Armed Services from 1955 to 1957. Following his military service, Jim dedicated over 37 years to the USDA-Soil Conservation Service, working in Effingham, Altamont, and Chanute, Kansas. His 23 years as Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator in Southeastern Kansas showcased his dedication to his community. After his retirement in April 1994, Jim remained active, working part-time for the Public Wholesale Water Supply District #11 and the SEE-KAN Resource Conservation and Development Project, and even contributing his time to Penwell-Gabel Funeral Homes. A was a devoted member of Westview Southern Baptist Church in Chanute since 1971, Jim served tirelessly as a trustee, deacon, chair of the 2003-2004 Church Building Committee, Sunday School teacher, choir member, and on numerous other committees. His faith was a cornerstone of his life. He was also an active member of the National Active and Retired Employees Association (NARFE), and ARCSE, holding several officer positions, including editor of their newsletter. In his leisure time, he enjoyed woodworking, tending his yard, and photography. He is survived by his children, Barbara Kay Parker and Daniel Kent; seven grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren, along with many nieces and nephews.
George	2025	John "Jack" Alvin George (95) of Davis, California, passed away peacefully on November 19, 2025, at Sutter Davis Hospital. Jack was born in Damascus, Georgia, on October 15, 1930, to Grady Isaiah and Bessie Mae. He graduated from the University of Georgia (UGA) with a degree in Agricultural Engineering. Knowing he would soon be drafted; he enlisted in the United States Air Force and consequently missed his last final exam at UGA — though with no lasting harm. Hostilities in the Korean War were suspended prior to his deployment, and he was able to complete his service without seeing combat. Upon his release from active duty, Jack began his career with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS). He relocated to Redding, California and thoroughly enjoyed his early career making field visits to farmers and ranchers in Shasta, Siskiyou and other Northern California counties, helping them develop plans to irrigate their crops and rangeland. In 1961, he met and married Janet, and together they began their family. They moved from Redding to Red Bluff, California, and finally settled in Davis when Jack's career brought him to the SCS State Office. A highlight

		of his career was leading the federal funding program for emergency flood recovery efforts in Los Angeles in 1978 (prior to the establishment of FEMA). He retired after more than 30 years with the Soil Conservation Service. Jack enjoyed a full and active retirement, traveling locally with their travel trailer as well as on numerous trips to Europe, Mexico and Hawaii. He was a member of University Covenant Church since the 1970s. Jack is survived by his beloved wife, Janet; their children Jennifer Michael (Fred) and Jim (Wanda); grandchildren Kevin Babcock (Jen), Tiffany Eschbach (Mark), Jeff Michael (Heather), Andrew George and Beth Brooke (Trevor); and 10 great-grandchildren. A graveside service at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery will take place January 22, 2026, followed by a reception.
Gray	2023	Senior Conservationist and Honorary Member Ralph Earl Gray (98) of Willoughby, Ohio (formerly of Troy, Ohio), passed away November 11, 2023. Ralph was born in Warren, Ohio on November 12, 1924. He met the love of his life, Betty in Cortland, Ohio. He attended The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, majoring in agriculture but his education was broken up by World War II. He served in the United States Navy stationed at the Panama Canal. He worked his entire career for the USDA-Soil Conservation Agency in Findlay, Kenton, and Troy, Ohio, where he was the District Conservationist. He retired in 1985. Ralph was a lifelong volunteer at the First Methodist Church, Sertoma, and the hospital during his working years in Troy and for the past 14 years in Cleveland, Ohio. Most notably he volunteered in many capacities at Breckenridge Village (BV) where he and Betty resided, spending his Tuesday afternoons with his friend Dick working on the BV model railroad layout and sharing it with visitors. He spent many years as a volunteer for the Cuyahoga rail system. In 2019 he earned the honor of Volunteer of the Year, amassing over 5000 volunteer hours. Ralph leaves behind his beloved wife of 76 years Betty, his three children Marvin Gray (Joy), Linda West (Claude), and Ann Hesselbacher (Robert); grandchildren Daniel Gray (Sarah) and Matthew Gray (Rachel); and great grandchildren Lottie, Hattie, Jack, and Jasper Gray and numerous nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by granddaughters Eleanor Anne and Rebecca Diane Hesselbacher.
Henson	2025	Odos Gene Henson (93) of Stillwater, Oklahoma, passed away on December 13, 2025. Odos was born on September 28, 1932, in Lindsay, Oklahoma, to James Arthur Henson and Sarah Gladys Henson. On December 9, 1959, Odos married Claudia Dianne Coffey at Buffalo Baptist Church in Beckham County, Oklahoma. Their marriage of over 66 years stands as a testament to their devotion to faith and family. Odos earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy from Oklahoma A&M. He built a distinguished career as a soil scientist and agronomist with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service, work that reflected both his respect for the land and his commitment to public service. A longtime member of Stillwater Bible Church, Odos's faith was an important foundation throughout his life. Outside of work, he found great joy in fishing, hunting, gardening, and collecting artifacts and arrowheads-interests that reflected his love of the outdoors and appreciation for Oklahoma's natural history. Odos was preceded in death by his grandson, Isaac Henson. He is survived by his beloved wife, Dianne; his sisters, Betty Robbins and Mary Beckham; his children, Kim Hall (Vance); Mark Henson (Monica), and his grandchildren, Sophia Henson, Autumn (Mark) Allred, Anna Robbins, and Vance Hall (Kaitlin); and his great-grandchildren, Sophia and Madeline Hall.
Higginbotham	2025	Rudy K. Higginbotham (79) of Columbia, Kentucky, passed away December 5, 2025, at the Veterans Administration Hospice Cottages in Lexington, Kentucky. Rudy was born in Ono, Kentucky on January 24, 1946, to the late Raymond and Ertress Flanagan Higginbotham. He was a veteran of the Vietnam War serving in the United States Army. He worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist and then District Conservationist, retiring in 2001. Rudy was a member of the Columbia Christian Church, formerly serving as an Elder and Deacon. Rudy was an active member of the community. He served as a former board member of the Adair County Water District and Airport Board. He enjoyed restoring antique farm equipment and spending time with his family and friends, especially his grandchildren. Survivors include his wife Rebecca, son Patrick (Erica) Higginbotham of Lexington; and three grandchildren Elliot, Aubrey and Evelyn Higginbotham.
Kiger	2024	Luana Ellen Glidewell Kiger (78) of Boise, Idaho, passed away October 9, 2024, surrounded by her loving family in Idaho. Luana was born September 8, 1946, to her father James Maston Glidewell and her mother Geraldine Price. Luana received a master's degree in public policy and public administration, and a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy, from California State University. She worked most of her career for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in various field, state, and regional positions. She finished her NRCS career as Special Assistant to the State Conservationist in Davis, California. This included a two-year detail to establish a statewide water conservation program for the Department of Water Resources (DWR) in conjunction with CALFED (CALFED Bay-Delta Program). At DWR she led the development of the statewide taskforce on use of recycled water and the first statewide taskforce on encouraging the use of desalinated water. She was a founding member of the Environmental Farming Science Advisory Panel. She spent most of her career striving to benefit farming and water conservation in a host of ways. She Retired in 2017. Luana enjoyed reading, enjoying the peace of the outdoors and spending time with her son and his family. She is survived by brother James (Parvina), Sister Linda (James), stepsister Dorothy (the late Danny) son Nathan (Kirshna), her beloved grandson Eli and a host of nieces and nephews. All of whom remember her fondly and will dearly miss her.
Lemon	2025	Wilma Jean Lemon (96) of McMinnville, Oregon passed away on July 5, 2025. Wilma was born in Osawatomie, Kansas on November 2, 1928. She was the widow of Chuck Lemon, who was the West National Technology Center Director for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service, retiring in 1984. Chuck passed away in 2012. Information on her life and survivors was not available in her obituary.
Lindsey	2025	Ralph Donald "Don" Lindsey (93) of Hanover, Pennsylvania, passed away on November 24, 2025 after 4 days on hospice care at Homewood. Don was born in Washington, DC on October 2, 1932, the son of Ralph and Elizabeth (Cox) Lindsey. Don graduated from the University of Maryland in 1954 as an Animal Husbandry major. During his college years he played for the Washington Redskins band (trombone). He was drafted and served in the United States Army at Fort Rucker Alabama from 1955 to 1957, eventually trading in his Browning Automatic Rifle for the trombone when reassigned to the post band. He was the husband of Shirley (Smith) Lindsey- they shared 71 years of loving marriage. Don and his wife Shirley bought a farm in Adams County where they lived briefly, then rented it out for many years as his job with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service took them all over the state. They moved to Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, in 1963 and made a home there until 1987, making friends wherever they went. Don worked with farmers to improve soil and water quality, and on rural abandoned strip-mine improvement. His final post brought them back to Adams County as the District Conservationist, and back to that first farm. Don's survivors include his wife Shirley, sons Scott (Joyce) and Bruce (Doris),

		daughter Julie (Ed), 10 grandchildren (Katie, Colin (Liz), Caleb (Yoshimi), Josh, Ross (Emily), Logan, Quinn, Christopher (Kera), Kurt (Abbie), and Emily (Ben)) and 11 great grandchildren.
Maddux	2025	Member Clarence "Owen" Maddux (84) of El Dorado, Kansas, passed away on November 20, 2025. Owen was born on April 11, 1941, in Watonga, Oklahoma the son of Roy A. and Dorothy Elmira (Edsall) Maddux. He attended Oklahoma State University where he earned his bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering. On December 29, 1962, Owen was united in marriage to the love of his life, Marjorie Carroll Ensminger, in Watonga, Oklahoma. Owen dedicated his career to the USDA-Soil Conservation Service, working as a construction and project engineer in Eastern Kansas. His efforts in flood prevention and land stewardship left a positive and lasting impact on communities across the region. A man of many passions, Owen was a true vintage car enthusiast. He proudly owned two 1926 Model T's and a 1930 Model A, and he loved participating in parades as a member of the Bluestem Vintage Auto Car Club. His appreciation for older country music, tractors, RV traveling, family reunions, genealogy, and carpentry reflected a life lived with curiosity, craftsmanship, and heart. Owen is survived by his wife, Marjorie; daughter, Tracey Zieman; sons, Tony (Kelly) Maddux and Mark (Anita Sullivan) Maddux; grandchildren, Jacob, Ava, Ella, and Sophia Maddux; brothers, Larry (Judy) Maddux and Vernon (Sheryl) Maddux; sister, Joyce (Greg) Rogers; and many treasured nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and brothers, Wayne Maddux, and Don Maddux.
Miller	2025	Leona Mae Miller (85) of Clinton, Oklahoma, passed away peacefully on November 14, 2025, in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Leona was born near Indianola, Oklahoma, to Herbert and Minnie Lucus on September 9, 1940. She married Claude "Buddy" Miller in 1962 at the Presbyterian Church of Burns Flat, Oklahoma. She attended school at Carnegie, Oklahoma; Vernon, Texas, and graduated from Shamrock High School in Shamrock, Texas in 1958. She retired in 2004 from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, where she worked as a Clerk/Typist. She was preceded by the death of her husband Claude in 2018, her parents, and three siblings. She is survived by her son Justyn Miller and his spouse Tammy. She will be resting in the Miller family plot in the Clinton Cemetery.
Nelson	2025	Dana Frazer Nelson (81) of Ellsworth, Maine, passed away from leukemia on November 19, 2025, in Portland, Maine surrounded by the love of his family. He was born January 26, 1944, to George Carl and Maud Lena (Rugan) Nelson in Caribou, Maine. In 1968 he graduated from Ricker College with a degree in geology and minors in mathematics and soil science. He then entered the United States Army and served in Vietnam where he became a sergeant in charge of an 8-inch and a 175 mm self-propelled artillery gun crew. He received Army commendation medals for his role in the 1969 March Offensive on the D.M.Z. and for his role in supervising construction of a new Artillery Battery Area. After military service, in 1970, he was employed as a soil scientist with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in Waldo County Maine for 8 years; as a soil conservationist in the St. John Valley, Maine for 5 years; as district conservationist in Washington County, Maine for 2 years; as district conservationist in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, for 3 years; and as a Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator for Down East Maine Resource Conservation and Development for 12 years. He retired in 1999 after 30 years of government service. In 1970, he met fellow soil scientist, Sandra Jean Field of Bangor, and in October 1971 they were married. Survivors include four children and their families, George Carl Nelson (Rosallynn) of Trenton, Maine, Louise Nelson Hamelin (Marc) of Waterville, Maine, Emily Maud Nelson (Chaitanya Saha), and Anna Jean DeLuca (Christian) all of Portland; five grandsons, Joseph and Benjamin Hamelin, Rugan DeLuca, George and Robert Nelson; and one granddaughter, Estella Lucia DeLuca.
Peterson	2025	Dennis Martin Peterson (85) of Ankeny, Iowa, passed away peacefully on November 23, 2025. He was born February 17, 1940, to Harold Peterson and his Doris (Christenson) Peterson. Dennis married the love of his life, Gerri Warner, and they went on to spend 64 beautiful years together. Dennis served in the United States Army for 18 months. Dennis worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service as a Draftsman in the State Office Design Section. His precision, artistry, and work ethic earned him admiration and trust from colleagues through the years. For 25 years, Dennis also worked part-time for a patent attorney. His dedication to his community was just as strong. At Longfellow Elementary, Dennis volunteered teaching children to read, helping parents learn to read, even dressing up as Clifford the Big Red Dog. His generosity, enthusiasm, and heart earned him the Des Moines Education Association Volunteer of the Year Award for his service in the Des Moines public schools, but what mattered most to him were the relationships he built and the people he helped. He loved church, loved singing, and especially loved being part of choirs. He is survived by his wife, Gerri Peterson; his sister, Deb Smith; and his half-brother, Bill Leech. Dennis is also survived by his son, Steve Peterson (Sherri Peterson); his grandchildren, Austin Peterson Sr. (Brittany Peterson), TJ Peterson (Kelsey Peterson), and Rondi Ballard (Ben Ballard); and his 8 beloved great-grandchildren, Austin Peterson Jr., Colton Peterson, Elias Peterson, Pearl Peterson, Emmy Peterson, Addy Ballard, Aubrey Ballard, and Mike Ballard.
Plumb	2025	Connie M. Plumb (85) of Council Bluffs, Iowa, passed away October 24, 2025, at Primrose Assisted Living. Connie was the wife of the late Marion K. Plumb, who worked as a Civil Engineering Technician for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. Connie was born April 15, 1940, in Griswold, Iowa, to the late John and Catherine "Caroline" (Lawson) Weston. She graduated from Griswold High School in 1957. Connie married Marion on June 6, 1959. She worked for Council Bluffs Community Schools and Iowa School for the Deaf retiring in 1993. She was a member of St. Patrick Catholic Church and the over 50 Walking Club at Henry Doorly Zoo. Connie enjoyed baking and sewing, motorcycling, and dancing. Connie was preceded in death by her husband, Marion in 2024 and son-in-law, Lynn Bertelsen. She is survived by her daughters, Lezli (Steve) Root of Lawrence, Kansas, Trisha (Nick) McGrain of Lenexa, Kansas, Sheila (Gary Bales) Bertelsen of Des Moines, Iowa, Rhonda (Robert) Casson of McClelland, Iowa; 8 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren.
Reybold	2023	Life Member William Umstead Reybold III "Bill" (90) of Easton, Maryland, passed away unexpectedly on March 9, 2023. Bill was born April 8, 1932, to William U. and Rosalie (nee Steel) Reybold of Newark Delaware. graduated in 1954 with a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy from the University of Delaware. He was a superb Blue Hen athlete on both the track and swim teams, receiving the Outstanding Athlete Award of 1954. In 2007 he was inducted into the University of Delaware Sports Hall of Fame. Bill also graduated with a commission as Army 2nd Lieutenant, serving 2 years as an artillery officer with the 5th Infantry Division and 11th Airborne Division in Munich, Germany and Fort Ord, California. After active service, he remained in the Army Reserve as a recruiter for West Point. He retired as a Colonel in 1992. He went on from college to become a prominent soil scientist with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service with his career beginning in Talbot County, Maryland. He spent the bulk of his career in Washington DC, trailblazing the digitization of soil surveys across the nation in the 1970's. As National Leader for Soil Geography, he travelled globally, sharing his

		extensive knowledge of soil mapping systems. He was Associate Editor of Soil Survey Horizons for 12 years. Upon retiring in 1989, Bill and Nancy returned to Talbot County where they happily spent the last years of their lives. During these years, Bill served on the Boards of the Waterfowl Festival, Pickering Creek Audubon Center and Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage. Other volunteer work included The Nature Conservancy, the Eastern Shore Conservancy and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. He was a member of the Tidewater Farm Club and served as secretary of the Easton Ruritan Club for 12 years. He enjoyed helping his artist wife hang shows in the local galleries and sailing competitively at the "Wednesday Night Races" in Annapolis. He was preceded in death by his devoted wife of 57 years Nancy South Reybold in 2016. Survivors include six children: Will (Julie) Reybold, Larry (Katie) Reybold, Nathan Reybold, Tom (Mary) Reybold, Jack Reybold (Mary Ann Sorra), and Abe Reybold (Ernie) Nolan; six grandchildren and five great grandchildren.
Runyon	2025	Patti Ann "Pat" (Coulter) Runyon (70) of West Baden Springs, Indiana, passed away on October 5, 2025, at Indiana University Health Hospice House in Bloomington, Indiana, surrounded by the love of her family and friends. She was the wife of retired Engineering Technician Jerry Runyon who worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Patti was born December 13, 1954, in Salem, Indiana to the late William Lester Coulter and Marie (Luttrell) Coulter. She graduated Paoli High School and attended Indiana University. She worked at the B+B Shoe Factory and later made a career out of working for Orange County Bank, from which she retired. Pat and Jerry were married for 50 years. They both loved traveling and made many trips out west. Pat had a heart for animals; especially those who were injured or abandoned. She and Jerry took in countless strays over the years. She is survived by her husband Jerry, her brother Jack (Barb) Coulter; 3 Brother-In-Laws Jan (Brenda) Runyon, Lawrence Robbins, and James Beatty Jasper; and many nieces and nephews.
Shook	2025	Roy Arthur Shook, Jr. (85) of Coventry, Connecticut, passed away on October 15, 2025. Roy was born February 26, 1940, in Bangor Pennsylvania, to the late Roy A. Shook, Sr. and Sarah (Parsons) Shook. Roy worked much of his career as a soil scientist for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS). He started his SCS career in New Jersey. When Roy left the agency, he was an Assistant State Soil Scientist in Connecticut. Our ARCSE Georgia State Representative, Edward Ealy, credits Roy with getting his SCS career started when he was assigned to work on Roy's Soil Survey crew in Sullivan County New Hampshire. Roy did the extra to make Edward, a black kid from Florida, feel welcome and accepted in New Hampshire. Roy is survived by his wife Orian (Handelony) Shook, his daughters, Laura Barnett (David) and Shelly Seymour (Ronald); grandchildren Joshua Barnett, Sarah Barnett, Ian Seymour, Roan Seymour, Fiona Seymour, Kiera Seymour and his great grandchildren, Jace and Mia Rivera and his sister Nancy Savercool. Roy's family would also like to express their gratitude to the staff at Mansfield Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation for their compassionate care of Roy while he was in their care.
Spitz	2025	Senior Conservationist and Life Member James Howard Spitz (94) of Daleville, Virginia, passed away on August 24, 2025. Jim was born in Rochester, New York on May 15, 1931, the son of the late Joseph W. and Ellen J. (Yarker) Spitz. He grew up on a small farm bordering Keuka Lake in New York; was a graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio; and was a United States Army veteran of the Korean Conflict serving between 1954-1956. He worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service 36 years, serving in New York State, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Indiana and Washington, DC. A Congressional Fellow in 1983-84, he served the last six years of his career in the Office of the Secretary as a Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. Since retirement in 1989 he has volunteered to Smith Mountain Lake Association as president; to Resurrection Catholic Church in Moneta; to the Tri-County Lake Administrative Commission; to the Virginia Lakes and Watershed Association; the Upper Roanoke River Table; and several citizen committees established by the Commonwealth. Jim and Hilde moved to The Glebe (a retirement community in Botetourt County) in 2016. Shortly thereafter, Jim joined the Troutville Volunteer Fire Department. and participated in establishing their first annual Golf Tournament as a fundraising event. Jim is survived by his loving wife, Brunhilde (Hilde); son James Albert of Bedford, Virginia; and daughter Susan Elaine (Spitz) Jamison of Roanoke, Virginia.
Steinhardt	2025	Professor Gary Carl Steinhardt (81) of West Lafayette, Indiana, passed away on December 12, 2025. He was born September 13, 1944, in Lansing, Michigan to Carl Frank Steinhardt and Doris Alzina Steinhardt (Sibley). He grew up on the family farm in Olive Township, Clinton County, Michigan. He attended Michigan State University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture and a master's degree in Soil Science. Gary enrolled in graduate school at Purdue University in 1971. He received his Ph.D. in Agronomy in 1976. During his graduate education, he formed and headed the Purdue Soil Survey Laboratory, Whiteside. While at Michigan State he enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Corps and with his degree he received a commission as a Second Lieutenant, Corps of Engineers in the United States Army Reserve. He served for two years on active duty from 1968 to 1970 including a tour of duty in Vietnam. He served in the Second Civil Affairs Company assigned to Military Assistance Command Vietnam Advisory Team 98 in Tan Uyen District, Bien Hoa Province. He was assigned to a unit in the United States Army Reserve upon his return to the United States. He completed his service obligation but continued serving in the Army Reserve in a variety of command and staff positions. He served a second period of active duty when he commanded the 480th Military Intelligence Detachment when it was mobilized in 1990 to support Desert Shield/Storm. He retired as a Colonel in 1996 with thirty years of service. Colonel Steinhardt was an Outstanding Graduate of the Associate Studies Program of the Air War College. His decorations include Legion of Merit, Bronze Star and Defense Meritorious Service Medals. He was inducted into the Indiana Military Veterans Hall of Fame in 2019. In 1973, he married Nguyen Thi Thinh at Faith Presbyterian Church in West Lafayette, Indiana. His wife Nguyen passed away earlier this year in May. Gary was a dedicated soil scientist, agronomist, educator, Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Fellow, and conservation leader. Professor Steinhardt devoted his career to advancing soil and water conservation and sustainable agricultural practices. As a long-time member of SWCS, he authored numerous articles published in the Society's journal, served on the Board of Directors for nine years, and was twice elected president. He inspired many with his passion for the land and its stewardship, and his contributions to soil mapping, water conservation, and educating future generations of scientists will continue to impact our communities and the environment for years to come. Dr. Steinhardt enjoyed extensive involvement in veterans' groups including the American Legion Post 38, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1154, La Societe des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux, the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, the Tippecanoe County Veterans Council, Disabled American Veterans Mary T. Klinker Chapter, and the Military Officers Association of America. He was a member of the Military Intelligence Corps Association and received the Knowlton Award in 1999. He has two daughters, Dr. Angela A. Steinhardt, MD (husband: Jonathan Sobieski) of Milton, Massachusetts, and Dr. Sarah Steinhardt Reiger, PharmD,

		JD, MS (husband: Curtis) of Martinsville, Indiana and four grandchildren, Jolie Aimee Sobieski, Jacqueline Nguyen Sobieski, Jonathan Edward Sobieski Jr, and Joel Steinhardt Sobieski. His complete obituary is at https://www.fisherfuneralchapel.com/.../Gary-Carl .
Wachel	2025	Larry Joe Wachel (73) of Morgan's Point Resort, Texas, passed away on October 31, 2025, in Temple, Texas. He was born on August 1, 1952, to Floyd Paul and Helen (Sypniewski) Wachel. He married Carolyn (Wilganowski) Wachel on April 17, 1977, in Marlin, Texas. He attended St. Mary's Catholic School, Bremond High School, and McLennan Community College, later earning a Bachelor of Science degree from Baylor University. Larry dedicated over 34 years of service to the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service as a civil engineering technician and GIS Specialist. He lived and worked in several Texas communities over the years, including Bremond, Marlin, Waco, Houston, Burleson, and Temple. Larry was also a real estate agent. Larry cherished time spent with his family, loved working in the yard, cooking, and visiting with friends. Above all, he treasured every moment with his beloved granddaughter. Larry is survived by his wife, Carolyn Wachel of Morgan's Point Resort; his children, Lindsey Barton (Ben) and Kevin Wachel (partner Jeremy Walder); his brother, Tim Wachel (Pam); and his granddaughter, Kinsley Rae Barton.
Walter	2025	Elizabeth Jeanne Walter , "Jeanne" (88) of Tucson, Arizona, passed away peacefully, with her best friend and partner John Colvin by her side, on November 4, 2025, at Famiglia Amore Assisted Living. Jeanne was born on July 28, 1937, in San Francisco, California, the daughter of Willard and Amy (Bunselmeier) Sargent. Because of her father's employment with the U.S. Army, Jeanne was raised in California, Washington, South Dakota, New Mexico, Nebraska, Germany, and Belgium. She attended Lassen Jr. College in Susanville, California and Chico State College in Chico, California. Jeanne was employed by the United States Army at Sioux Ordnance Depot, Sidney, Nebraska, Stead Air Force Base, Reno, Nevada and the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in Phoenix, Arizona, where she worked as a Personnel Assistant on the Human Resources staff. She retired in December 1987. Jeanne had a lifelong passion for travel, which she pursued full-time in her motor home. In 2003, she purchased an RV lot in Kamiah, Idaho, where she enjoyed spending her summers. While in Kamiah, she volunteered at Loving Hands Thrift and More and frequently attended The Life Center church. Jeanne is preceded in death by her late husband, Robert Walter, who worked for SCS as a Watershed Engineer. Jeanne is survived by 6 nieces and nephews, Christi (Arthur) Wise, Cheryl (Dick) Woodward, Sally (Scott Taylor) Pittsenbarger, Erin (Mark) Ellison, Lawrence (Lisa) Rager, and Michael (Elizabeth) Rager; 9 great nieces and nephews; and 4 great-nephews.



DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH-APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS IS FEBRUARY 25TH, 2025.