

Annual Report

Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees

2025-2026

ARCSE is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit membership organization made up of state chapters. We help members stay connected with one another and with colleagues at USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. We also promote members' continued commitment to conservation and the wise use of natural resources.

VISION: An active, engaged community of retirees who remain connected with colleagues, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other conservation partnership organizations.

MISSION: ARCSE provides timely communications, networking opportunities, and activities that keep retirees connected and informed so they can support efforts to protect and conserve the nation's natural resources.

BOARDS:

Governing Board: Becky Fletcher, President; Julie MacSwain, Immediate Past President; Robin Martinek, President-Elect; Jack Carlson, Secretary; Becky Ross, Treasurer; and Regional Vice Presidents Janet Perry, East; John Mueller, South; Chris Tippie, Midwest; and Bill Ward, West.

Advisory Board: Paul Benedict, Membership Chair; Craig Derickson, Notes from the Potomac Editor; Jerry Bernard, Newsletter Editor; Cheryl Simmons, SWCS Liaison; and Julie MacSwain, Media Coordinator.

Incoming Board Members for 2026: Kristin Graham Chavez, West Region Vice President, and Ruth Montgomery, Senior Conservation Chronicler. A very special thank you to Bill Ward for serving as the West Region VP for many years!

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

- ◆ Recognized 2024–25 ARCSE award recipients:
 - Distinguished Service: Richard (Dick) Gooby, Montana; Cheryl Simmons, Idaho; Don Stettler, Oregon
 - Meritorious Service: Donna Beggs, Idaho; Craig Derickson, Nebraska; Melvin Womac, Maryland
 - Outstanding Community Service: Bill Kuentler, Florida and Rev. Dr. Clifford Jones, Alabama
- Held the annual meeting in Costa Mesa, CA.
- Developed the Annual Plan of Work and accomplished or started 75 percent of assigned tasks.
- Reviewed the Charter and Operating Policies and Procedures.
- Set up Zelle as an option for online payments.
- Held three online meetings with state representatives and members to discuss these topics:
 - National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE)
 - Current legislative activities
 - Importance of maintaining contact with state conservationist and key state office employees

- Importance of maintaining a current contact list
- Conservation Partnership employee mentoring and training needs and opportunities for ARCSE members and other retirees
- The need to reach recent NRCS retirees and make them aware of opportunities to use their training and mentoring skills.
- Soil and Water Conservation Society partnership opportunities and retiree benefits.

Special thanks to Rich Duesterhaus (NACD and ARCSE), Jan Thomas (NACD), Julie MacSwain, Harold Klaege, Rob Lawson, Craig Derickson, Chris Tippie, Robin Martinek, Jack Carlson, Renee Boudin (SWCS), and Paul Benedict for organizing and presenting at these events.

ARCSE Projects

Musicians Project: More than 25 musicians have submitted biographies and samples of their work. Submissions include information about members' life experiences, instruments, musical activities, and careers with the agency. Biographies are shared on the website and Facebook page. ARCSE plans to share selected member music on the ARCSE YouTube channel in the future. The team continues to promote the project and identify musicians who worked for SCS/NRCS. Biographies and guidelines are available on the ARCSE web-

site at <https://arcse.org/musicians>. Special thanks to Bill Ward for leading this effort.

For updates on the **Mentoring Program** and **Conservation Partnership Employees Training Opportunities** please see our newsletters.

MEMBERSHIP

- Held the second membership drive.

Recognized membership drive winners: Nancy Pao-
lini, East Region; Ralph Mashburn, South Region;
and Julie MacSwain, West Region Acting Vice Presi-
dent.

- Welcomed 30 new members and added 10 new life members.
- Published 155 obituaries.
- Published and distributed the Member and NRCS Leaders Directory.
- Recognized five new Senior Conservationists, age 83 and older, who applied for the designation.

David D. Breitbach, IA

Richard Gallo, NC

Norm Koester, NE

Rhett H. Johnson, TX

Michael Schendel, WI

- ♦ Recognized 19 new Honorary Members, age 91 and older, who no longer pay dues.

Mark Boysen TX J Michael Nethery UT

Joseph Branco LA Walter J Ochs VA

William Conner WI Barbara Osgood VA

Jimmie W Frie OK Frank F Reckendorf OR

Richard W Hall IA Willis J Ridenour FL

Joseph S Haugh VA Dean F Sherman NH

Stanley Hobson ID Stanley R Simmons IA

Francis T Holt NC Burns (Ed) Smith MO

Ralph Mashburn AR Charline A Woodside NE

Bruce McCullough AR

PARTNERSHIPS

NRCS

- Continued activities under the Memorandum of Understanding.
- Promoted the online mentor application form.
- Held a mentoring symposium and basic training session in Costa Mesa.
- Two mentoring project updates published

- Connected with national NRCS staff about future partnership opportunities.
- Promoted the 90th Black Sunday Commemoration on Facebook and in the newsletter.
- Two Earth Team articles published
- Made contact with new Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs.

Soil and Water Conservation Society

- Signed a partnership agreement.
- Hired a summer intern.
- 2026 Facebook calendar developed
- Held joint annual meetings in Costa Mesa, CA.
- Sponsored SWCS student and early-career professional networking sessions.
- Staffed the ARCSE exhibit at the SWCS Conference

Other Partnership Activities

Due to hiring and staffing changes under the new administration, work on the New Horizons Memorandum of Understanding focused on promoting the New Horizons ACES program and publishing three success stories in the newsletter and on Facebook.

Worked with the National Association of Conservation Districts (and the National Conservation Planning Partnership) to explore ways to deliver conservation planning and soil health training to partnership employees in the coming years. This effort aligns well with ARCSE's mentoring program.

COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletter

- Published six newsletters.
- Mailed an average of 55 hard copies and emailed an average of 738 copies, with total publication costs of \$1,941, including the directory and postage.
- Published articles on the ACES program, SWCS partnership, Earth Team, ARCSE Musicians Project, social media, scamming alerts, Senior Chronicles, National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, Thrift Savings Plan, mentoring, donations, and other topics.
- Published six *News from the Potomac* updates.

Online and Social Media

- Facebook
 - Published approx 1,000 Facebook posts.
 - Reached 694 Facebook followers.
 - Tracked Facebook page likes.
- Updated and maintained the website.
- Added or maintained photos on Flickr and Google Photos.
- Set up the YouTube channel.

Conservation and Service are Always Part of Us!

Thank you to everyone who donated to ARCSE last year! To request a copy of the annual financial report, contact Becky Ross, Treasurer, at arcsetreas@gmail.com.