

Outgoing President's Report

Maureen Stine

SWCS Annual Meeting

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When Hugh Brown asked me if I'd like to be appointed President-elect of our Chapter, I was attending a three-week course called, 'Conservation Boot Camp' in Oklahoma in April, 2015. I had just been elected Vice President in 2014, and at the time, it was unclear to me what an incredibly rewarding and challenging year 2016 would prove to be, nor all the professional experiences, and friends I would ultimately gain through serving our organization.

We've enjoyed many victories this year, including the success of our annual highway clean-up which removes approximately 17 bags of trash - not only protecting motorists but also eliminating the potential to negatively impacting Michigan's wildlife. We've explored ways to protect, grow and diversify our Scholarship Fund through Hugh's work with the Vanguard Fund. We've shared incredible outreach and education messages by recruiting talented scientists, professors and other natural resource professionals to speak at at our ANR Seminar – kicking off ANR week at MSU. We accepted an impressive Sustained Chapter Performance Award for continuing excellence and overall programming over a period of more than two years, this year at the annual conference held in Louisville, Kentucky, (many thanks to NRCS Chief Weller for enabling my attendance at that outstanding conference) and this afternoon we have the opportunity to network and learn some exciting technology and software programs with professionals and colleagues in our afternoon workshop from the efforts of many including Jon Bartholic and Laura Young. Although I was sure some extra outreach work on my part would add to our membership numbers, we've managed to essentially maintain our member base through that personal contact and influence we had on friends and colleagues.

I do not have a life-long background in agriculture or natural resources. I grew up in the City of Chicago and as kids we played in the alley behind my home because it was safer than the only green spaces available – our city parks, which were at the time fairly dangerous for young kids to frequent alone. Until I was 41, when I started with NRCS, I knew no one who had farms or livestock or acreage. Serving our Chapter, on our Executive Committee these past two years has helped strengthen my knowledge base in conservation practices and keep current with cutting edge techniques to protect our natural resources. Because of your influence, I read one of the best publications I have ever read: Relationship with the Land which truly laid the foundation within me, of the deep importance and the values of our work. You have introduced me to professionals in our field who give their best in the name of helping the soil, water, air, plants and wildlife of our beautiful state. I even learned Roberts Rules! Well not really, but the effort was there.

Author, Wheeler McMillen, had the very fortunate opportunity to know Hugh Hammond Bennett personally and upon their last encounter, he asked Hugh what the most important thing was that he had learned over the years. Hugh replied, *“That a man can make his soil better than what nature provided for his use”*. I believe we can apply this truth to every area in our lives. All of you have been an incredible network of support and learning for me these past twelve months and, I would like to extend a very special thank you to Dan Kesselring for his patience and kindness and guidance. As I continue on this year with the Policy Committee work, I look forward to future victories in our mission, and I want to thank you all for the footprints you have left in my life. Thank you.