

2019 President's Annual Report: Michigan Chapter of the Soil & Water Conservation Society

"The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land" - Luna Leopold

It's been a pleasure to serve as President and I'd like to thank the entire membership for its continued support of the Chapter and its mission. Special thanks to the members of the Executive Council: Daniel F. Kesselring, Kelly Goward, Tim Harrigan, Katie Droscha, Gerald Miller, Rebecca Bender, Dan Busby, Hugh Brown, Zach Curtis and Jim Marshall. Members of the Executive Council dedicate long hours and sometimes significant personal expense to attend meetings, take time out from their work day for teleconferences often paying their own transportation – all because soil and water conservation is part of their lives and their personal values.

Chapter Accomplishments

Over the past year, our Chapter's accomplishments include:

- Continued in-kind contribution to promote the Maple River RCPP project
- Successful ANR Week Seminar (moved to Agroliquid)
- Membership Survey
- Letter to membership responding to proposed changes to Part 301 and 303, P.A. 451, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act.
- Chapter Representation at the National SWCS Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA
- Silent Auction at National Meeting
- 2019 SWCS Chapter Achievement Award and Outstanding Chapter Award
- MEAP Partnership Agreement
- Preparation and Coordination with MACD for the October Annual Meeting
- Addition of a paid Communications Intern, Anna DeBraber, sponsored by Hugh Brown
- Fall Field Tour Planned
- Continued Chapter Website Development
- Social media pages – Facebook and LinkedIn
- Monthly Teleconferences
- Others

Moving Forward

There are currently 57 members of the Michigan Chapter of the Soil & Water Conservation Society, one less than a year ago. A primary goal of the Chapter is grow the membership, which has proven difficult over the years. As we have discussed, there are several reasons for the decline, including competition from other conservation-related groups that offer services more closely tailored to the specific interests of their members.

A major strength of our Chapter, in my opinion, is its professionalism and adherence to sound science. This quality needs to be maintained regardless of membership goals. At the same time, as Zach Curtis pointed out at our ANR seminar "partnerships build trust." The partnerships we have with MACD, MEAP, Maple River RCPP and others are vital to the Chapter's mission and we should continue to seek similar relations with other quality organizations.

Finally, I can't finish this without some comments related to 2019 weather conditions. According to the most recent data available, Lake Superior is 15 inches higher than the October average, Lakes Michigan and Huron are 32-inches above the October average, and Lake Erie is 23 inches above its October Average. Wet winter and spring conditions prevented planting of thousands of acres of cropland and I look forward to seeing some hard numbers on the totals. Trade policies also impacted growers and some careful analysis of the effects of the weather conditions and tariff policies on conservation practices seems warranted. We're living in interesting times!

I'm confident the Chapter will continue and grow its success under its new leadership, supported by sage advice from experienced members, and fortified by the energy and exciting new ideas from newer members. There's a lot to do next year, let's make it a good one.

Wishing you all the very best,

John A. Freeland, PhD - President