

Profiles



DEPARTMENT OF
SOIL SCIENCE
University of Wisconsin-Madison

FEBRUARY 2011

Message from the Department Chair

Friends of Soil Science at UW-Madison:



The relevance of soil science knowledge and expertise expands constantly—still essential to the challenges of, say, crop nutrition, it has emerged as central to understanding Earth's changing atmospheric composition. Even within our discipline's first home, agriculture, soil science perspectives are finding

new applications in emerging fields such as agroecology, regional food systems, and sustainability. Here I describe two efforts that have pulled several of us toward what I consider expanded perspectives of agricultural scholarship.

The Agroecology MSc program (<http://agroecology.wisc.edu>) is an interdisciplinary graduate degree program in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, in which faculty members from some 14 CALS departments mentor MSc students in a multidisciplinary approach to shaping the future of agriculture. A handful of us in Soil Science have served as advisors to students in the program during its four-year history, working on projects including urban agriculture, life cycle assessment of corn ethanol, and bioenergy crop production. The curriculum exposes students to both the biophysical and social sides of the agricultural endeavor, emphasizing that both are critical to facilitating change. The program avoids labels such as "sustainable" or "organic," emphasizing rather that there are many choices to be made about how we grow food, and the first task is to work toward inclusive debates that respect individual choices and are solidly based in scientific knowledge. The soil seems to be a facet of agroecology particularly susceptible to, well, rather muddled ideas and wishful thinking, so we have much to contribute.

Professor Steve Ventura in our department is the director of a five-year, nearly \$5 million project, getting underway this month, to better understand and facilitate development of sustainable community and regional food systems in urban areas. Funded by the USDA, collaborators include Growing Power, Inc. (of Milwaukee), Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, UW-Extension, and Michigan State University. Researchers and educators will work with urban agricultural endeavors in Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Boston, Los Angeles, Madison, and Cedar Rapids, to identify the characteristics of successful programs—including how safe and productive soil resources can be identified, and, if necessary, remediated, before contributing to local food security.

Soil Science is as dynamic a discipline as ever, and these two programs illustrate the continuing evolution of agricultural scholarship underway in our department. Stay in touch.

Bill Bland, Chair

Balser Named U.S. Professor of the Year

Teri Balser was honored at a luncheon and ceremony in Washington, DC, in November, where she was named U.S. Professor of the Year.

The program, sponsored by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the

Advancement of Teaching, selects four professors nationally each year, one each from doctoral, masters, and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, and community colleges. Teri is the winner in the "Doctoral and Research Universities" category. Selection criteria include impact on and involvement with undergraduates; scholarly approach to teaching and learning; contributions to undergraduate education in the school, community, and profession; and support from colleagues and former students. In addition to her position as an associate professor in Soil Science, Teri is director of the Institute for Cross-College Biology Education and is a member of the UW-Madison Teaching Academy. "I love seeing students ask tough questions and get discussions going, watching them be really creative in their answers and think really deeply about what we're doing and how it's useful to them outside class. I want them to learn things that they can use," Teri says. "That to me is success, when students leave the classroom and still want to learn more." To view an interview by WisconsinEye, follow this link: mms://71.87.25.133/IVOD/NMK/NMK_101202_teri_balser.wmv. Photos and video can also be seen at the U.S. Professors of the Year website: <http://www.usprofessorsoftheyear.org/Winners.html>



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Awards, Honors and News

Birl Lowery began a two-year, 75% administrative appointment as CALS Senior Associate Dean on December 15. This is the college's number-two administrative position, responsible for a broad range of activities, including faculty hiring, promotion, tenure and compensation, faculty and staff retention, and all program reviews. The remaining 25% of his appointment is devoted to his research program in Soil Science.

Nick Balster has been elected to the CALS Academic Planning Council (APC). The APC advises the dean on issues related to strategic planning and development of academic programs and other matters.

Phil Barak's appointment as CALS Interim Director of Information Technology has been renewed. Phil will continue to provide CALS with leadership in seeking immediate and long-range solutions to major information technology problems, including data security, server capacity, data storage and backup, web development, and development of tools for the administration to better serve the college.

Carrie Laboski has received the Education Award from the Wisconsin Crop Production Association at their recent Wisconsin Crop Management Conference. The award is for Leadership and Commitment to Educational Excellence.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Scholars Program has awarded **Glen Obear** (BS 2010; MS 20xx, Soldat) the Mendenhall Award. Selection criteria for the \$6,000 award includes academic excellence, work experience, extracurricular activities and potential to become a leading professional in the golf course management industry. The award also included a trip to the 2011 GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show.

Marie Johnston (PhD 20xx, Balster) was recognized by the Hydrology Section of the American Geophysical Union as a 2009 Fall Meeting Outstanding Student Paper Award recipient. Marie was invited to receive her award at the Hydrology Business Meeting/Luncheon at the December 2010 AGU meeting. Her paper was entitled "Does vegetation type matter? Plant-soil interactions change urban rain garden hydrology." AGU meetings have an international audience of over 16,000.

Jim Bockheim studies carbon-rich soils in the Arctic and Antarctic, in hopes of better understanding how much carbon dioxide they will release as the climate warms. His work was featured in a recent issue of eCALS with this video on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNM26IFSa_U

Pedologist faculty position available. We are seeking applicants for a tenure-track position in the faculty of the Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The successful candidate will assume a leadership role for pedological (study of the nature, formation, classification, and mapping of soil properties and phenomena) research and instruction in the department. Check out the full position description at http://www.soils.wisc.edu/soils/docs/SSSAadvert_Pedologist.



Soil Judging Team by Nicholas Haus

For the first time in nearly a decade, the Badgers competed at a Soil Judging Contest. Historically, Madison's soil judges were nationally recognized, and we hope to restore our reputation. Our enthusiastic team members were **David Evans**, **Gloria Ambrowiak**, **Kyle Rudersdorf**, **Lisa Zamzow**, **Peter Ganzlin**, **Trent Mayr**,

assistant Coach **Bettina Miguez** and Coach **Nicholas Haus**. This year's competition was held at Northern Illinois University, in Dekalb and Kane counties. The Badgers, as a brand new team, were underdogs in this competition and did not upset the more experienced teams in the end, but we left in good spirits, with a greatly expanded knowledge of soils and landscape evolution, and vowed to return to compete next season! We are grateful to Emeritus Professor **Art Peterson** and the family of **Henry Foth** whose gifts to the University of Wisconsin Foundation support our participation in soil judging contests.

Alumni Updates

The **Reverend Howard E. "Howie" Knox** (BS 42) wrote to let us know that he's in good health at age 91. After graduating with a degree in soil conservation, he answered our country's call to serve and joined the Navy for three years. After that he spent several years as Sheboygan County 4-H Club Agent, where he put to use his expertise in watershed study and land use, along with youth programming, until answering another call – this time for the ministry. He notes that he served in mostly rural churches working in 'soul' conservation as well as 'soil' conservation. He has remained in contact with UWEX agriculture staff over the years and comments that "it's been a wonderful life!" 125 Cedar Ridge Dr., Apt. S245, West Bend WI 53095-3675; 262-334-5925

Michael Aide (BS 76) is Head of the Department of Agriculture, Southeast Missouri State University. Among his list of accom-

plishments: placed a 4-yr program in plant/soil in Missouri Bootheel with 60 new majors in its first year (Fall 2010); developed the David M. Barton Agriculture Research Center (2008) for teaching and corporate sponsored research; developed the Charles Nemanick Alternative Ag Research Center (2010); managed Missouri Rice Research Farm (hybrid rice); developed giving opportunities for the department which raised 5 million over the last two years. Southeast Missouri State University, Dept. of Agriculture, 1 University Plaza, Cape Girardeau MO 63701; 573-651-2796; mtaide@semo.wisc.edu

Richard O. Grunewald (BS 52) comments that reading the Profiles articles and seeing the names of professors under whom he studied as an undergraduate is of great interest and pleasure. He was owner of Field Sprayer Manufacturing in Iowa and is now retired. 585 Seagull Drive, Mosinee, WI 54455; rogsue@mtc.net

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Recent Graduates

Kreuser, William C. – MS, 2010, The effect of growing degree day scheduled trinexapac-ethyl applications on the growth rate and fertility requirements of creeping bentgrass golf putting greens. (Soldat)

Minks, Kyle R. – MS, 2010, Evaluation of an at-grade stabilization structure impact on nonpoint source pollution in the unglaciated area of Wisconsin. (Madison, Lowery)

Halliday, Austin S. – BS, 2010, Agriculture and Natural Science (Balster)

Mayr, Trent A. – BS, 2010, Agriculture and Natural Resources (Balster)

Obear, Glen R. – BS, 2010, Agricultural Sciences-Production (Lowery)

Paxton, Andrew P. – BS, 2010, Agricultural Sciences-Production (Lowery)

Ganzlin, Peter W. – BS, 2010, Agriculture and Natural Resources (Barak)

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Allen Cattanaach (BS 68) is presently President of the Board of Directors of the Beet Sugar Development Foundation and President-Elect of the American Society of Sugarbeet Technologists. He remembers very fondly his time in Madison. 3646 Hidden Circle, West Fargo ND 58078; 701-237-4870; allancattanaach@rocketmail.com

Jon Schlegel (BS 84) sent this update from New Zealand: Had a distinguished career for 18 years with USDA NRCS, working with endangered species. Saw endangered Nene goose population climb from 200 to 2000 in that 18 year span and monk seal population on Kauai, Hawaii rise from 0 to 20+ in the same time. He was instrumental in developing critical habitat for 4 species of endangered waterbirds. He now is a beekeeper at Owen River Cottage in New Zealand and is trying to live sustainably (along with sheep, cows, horses, pigs, chickens, and pheasants). He offers a G'day mates! 141 Boundary Rd., Featherston NZ; owenrivercottage@gmail.com

John Murdock (PhD 56; Emeritus Professor) was invited to participate in the 26th Brazilian Agronomy Congress last year where he was honored with the Certificate of Recognition on behalf of the Faculty of Agronomy at UFRGS. The event was the 40th anniversary of Operação Tatu – The Project for Recuperation of Soil Fertility. Following the Congress which was held in Porto Alegre, he traveled to Santa Rosa where the program was first made operational. John was able to visit with his friends and enjoyed greatly seeing his “Brazilian family” again. Back in the US again, John notes he is still farming in Kentucky! 1440 Killdeer Trail, Murray KY 42071; 270-435-4032; stacy.murdock@wk.net

James R. Keys, Jr., (BS 94; MS 96) was promoted to Program Director of Research & Development, Applied Power Division, at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, TX. His group consists of about 45 people, technicians through PhD's, who are primarily respon-

continued on back

Department of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Wisconsin's Changing Climate: Impacts and Adaptation

by Bill Bland

The Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (WICCI, <http://www.wicci.wisc.edu>) released its first comprehensive report, Wisconsin's Changing Climate: Impacts and Adaptation on February 7. The report synthesizes the work of some 15 Working Groups that studied climate change impacts on such diverse topics as cities, wildlife, storm water, and human health. Among the Working Groups was Soil Conservation, a collaboration amongst Department of Soil Science scientists **Laura Ward Good**, **Dick Wolkowski**, **John Norman**, and **Bill Bland**, and representatives from WDNR, WDATCP, Dane County, and the River Alliance of Wisconsin. The full report is available on the WICCI website, and the Soil Conservation report is available on our website. Soil erosion could more than double in the coming decades, unless we can foster more widespread adoption of the practices that we know conserve our precious soil resource.

Alumni Updates continued from p3

sible for high-precision electromechanical systems with high resolution data acquisition for use in field environments. Jim encouraged alumni to check out SWRI's website, www.swri.org, noting that they hire from a wide variety of backgrounds. 210-522-5466; james.r.keys@swri.org

Robert Morrison (PhD 89) is chief editor of the Environmental Forensics Journal and is founder and president of the International Society of Environmental Forensics (ISEF). He has authored 15 books on the subject of environmental forensics and is now retired. PO Box 195, Hawi HI 96719; 808-884-5291; robert.morrison@dpra.com.

Alumni Update

We'd love to hear from you! Please complete and return this form or send your updates via email to: slspeth@wisc.edu

Name: _____

Degree(s) and Year(s): BS () MS () PhD ()

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Department of Soil Science • University of Wisconsin-Madison
1525 Observatory Drive • Madison WI 53706-1299

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University of Wisconsin
1525 Observatory Drive
Madison, WI 53706-1299

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