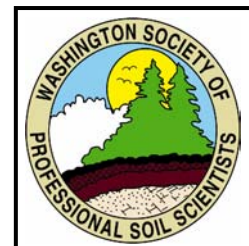


WSPSS NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2010

WASHINGTON
SOCIETY OF
PROFESSIONAL
SOIL SCIENTISTS



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State-Regulation (certification or licensing) of Soil Scientists A Washington State Perspective

By Lisa Palazzi (CPSS, PWS) and Dan Ufnar (CPSS, PWS)

As you all know, WSPSS members have been working on legislation for the past 8+ years that would create a state-regulated certification program for soil scientists (a title act, which regulates all aspects of professional work carried out by the certified individuals). We will be entering the 9th year of this effort in the 2011 session starting just after the New Year. (For information on current bill language and other related information, please visit the WSPSS website at <http://www.ieway.com/wspss/>, or the soil and wetland scientist certification website at <http://www.soilandwetlandscientistscertification.net/>.) We truly believe that we – as a profession -- must develop State-level certification or licensing programs to eliminate the slow suffocation of our profession in the private sector.

The lone soil scientist has only a very limited ability to make a convincing argument that will even be heard, let alone influence, political decisions on the State or national level. However, political entities are continually making decisions that impact our profession, and we need to make sure there is an effective voice available to influence and advise State policy makers. We need to continue to work within our professional organizations -- like WSPSS, and the National Society of consulting Soil Scientists (NSCSS), and the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) -- in order to speak with a large and unified voice, and also for their outreach, meeting and training opportunities. However, State-level certification or licensing programs are necessary to ensure the future of our profession – particularly in the private sector.

WSPSS has received past financial assistance and support for this effort to attain a State-level professional certification program from both the

WSPSS CALENDAR NOTICE FOR 2010

WSPSS Board Meeting for 2010

Meetings start usually at 9:00 a.m.

WSPSS WINTER MEETING

March 4th, 2011

WSPSS BOARD MEETING

March 4th, 2001 at the winter meeting

ASA-CSSA-SSSA International Annual Meetings

2011 Oct. 14-20, San Antonio, TX

WEB SITES

WSPSS

www.ieway.com/wspss/

ASA-CSSA-SSSA web sites

www.agronomy.org

www.crops.org

www.soils.org

Pac NW Soils Resources

http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/pnw_soil/index.html - general index page

http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/pnw_soil/wa_reports.html - tabular and spatial data

Soil Data Mart

<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Home page for National Soil Survey information. <http://soils.usda.gov/>

National Soil Survey Laboratory Characterization Data

<http://ssldata.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Soil Series Class. Data Access:

<http://ortho.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/osd/sc.html>

!

Soil Data Viewer user guides and software downloads

<http://www.itc.nrcs.usda.gov/soildataviewer/>

WA State Depart. Of Ecology's Wetland Home Page:

[Http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wetlands](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wetlands)

SSSA and the NSCSS. The SSSA can provide technical help, but no more funding at this time. However, we have an ongoing agreement that indicates that NSCSS will match funds that are donated by WSPSS or NSCSS members toward this effort. This matching fund money has been vital in the past few years, and is greatly appreciated.

We know that in these rough economic times, none of us have much extra money. Still -- we would very much like to continue to receive even small donations from WSPSS members, and hope that between NSCSS and WSPSS, we can build up our fund enough to finish this important work.

WSPSS members have put in hundreds of hours of volunteer time – a tremendous contribution that has allowed us to continue this enormous effort for so many years. For those of you who are new to our organization, we will provide some background information that explains why this is necessary and why it has taken so long.

In many states (including WA), State model ordinances (used by cities and counties to create local ordinances) list State-licensed or State-certified professionals as being preferred for certain kinds of professional work – because these ordinances are intended to protect citizens from harm. In WA State, there is an increasing trend by some of these state-licensed professionals to claim or be assigned services that fall under the normal and accustomed work of soil scientists – such as erosion control work, geomorphology studies comparable to soil mapping, soil infiltration potential assessment, and even wetlands delineations and related shallow groundwater monitoring work. **But there is no formal recognition or definition of our profession in State law; therefore, there is no way for the State to even know if the licensed individuals are overstepping their practice act boundaries or carrying out substandard work.**

So before we were even allowed to start a formal legislative effort – we had to convince the key Committee Chair in the State House of Representatives that it was worth spending public funds to carry out this detailed SR procedure, which includes a state-wide notification, public hearing and testimony process as well as about 4-6 months of work for the DOL analyst. In our case, we had to do this twice – once in 2004 when our proposal only included soil scientists, and again in 2007/2008 when we decided to share the administrative costs of a State certification program with wetland scientists. (That decision has had many unexpected side benefits, not the least of which is a much improved level of communication

and trust between the two professional groups.)

Not surprisingly, both SR reports found in our favor (in terms of justifying regulation) – that there was documented harm from unprofessional or unethical work. The final SR report (January 2008) recommended certification (title act) rather than licensure (practice act), because the former is less expensive for the state and *might* solve the problem. This is a typical conservative approach in WA State, assuming that the title act program can be converted to a practice act later if the title act does not appear to be adequate to protect the public. I should note that we had already chosen the title act route by the time that SR recommendation came out, due to difficulties in defining a unique “practice” that did not have unintended consequences on other citizens or professionals who also carry out what might be considered incidental soil science such as a farmer or an agronomist).

But despite that “finding of harm” conclusion and a recommendation for regulation of our profession in both SR reports, there is a continuous, effective, large and well-funded lobbyist opposition to our proposed legislation from two main organizations that are a coalition of engineers, architects, surveyors and landscape architects -- professions already state-licensed or state-certified. Their lawyers and lobbyists are at every hearing, challenging every statement, and have the ear or support of many legislators. They ALWAYS outnumber us at these hearings, which they know creates at least a perception of lack of support from our professions.

Notwithstanding, we have slowly gained support of many legislators over the years in both the house and in the Senate, and are posed and ready for this next session with a very well-crafted bill defining a professional program of which we can be proud. Recent research indicates that between soil scientists and wetland scientists, we have over 1100 potentially certified professionals in the Pacific Northwest. But we are at a crucial juncture in terms of time and money. We must pass this bill within the next two sessions (2011/2012), or we will likely lose the opportunity to ever try again. Our unpaid volunteer members who have put in hundreds of hours or work are growing weary; our funds are limited, and our single, poorly paid lobbyist long ago realized that we were not a profitable client. Ergo, our humble request above for continued matching fund fiscal assistance from NSCSS members

Without this state-level regulation of our profession, as other professions gain State licensure and/or certification, we will have to fight harder and harder to maintain our ability to practice our profession, and to convince regulators to value our experience and expertise. This places our consulting members and our profession at increasing risk. Maybe more important, it places consumers at risk in that often, they do not even have the opportunity to make a choice between a State-regulated professional versus the possibly more qualified, but unregulated soil scientist.

We note that 16-17 states currently regulate soil scientists to some degree, with the most recent new licensure bill passing last year in Tennessee (Congratulations Tennessee!!). This regulation benefits both the state and the profession by ensuring public access to qualified professionals, but also ensuring that there is a quality control mechanism in place to protect the consumer from substandard work. We need State-regulated professional programs to enhance and protect our profession and to better protect and serve the public.

Housekeeping notes - Toby Rodgers, WSPSS Secretary

WSPSS Charitable Funds

Each year WSPSS contributes a generous amount of monetary and logistical support to a variety of charitable endeavors within our state. For a non-profit group of our size, this is especially noteworthy considering the heavy lifting for these efforts is done directly by you, our members. Many members are already familiar with the various efforts but I wanted to provide a fresh reminder, especially for the newer members we've gained in the past few years. Each year as WSPSS collects membership dues (the vast majority of our operating budget), we also receive donations to designated funds. Occasionally the WSPSS Board has found it necessary to approve a portion of our operating budget to supplement the designated funds.

As a Board we recognize the difficult financial times of the past few years, especially for our consulting members. We do hope, however, we can count on the stalwart generosity of our members as 2011 approaches. Here is a little background information on the various funds maintained by the society:

WA State Certification, NSCSS Matching Effort – The National Society of Consulting Soil Scientists has agreed to another matching period through December 31, 2010 for donations provided by joint NSCSS/WSPSS members. NSCSS will match up to \$1500 in donations, to be used towards expenses incurred by WSPSS in the soil and wetland scientist certification effort. At present, WSPSS has received \$855 from NSCSS/WSPSS members, leaving us \$645 short of the \$1500 mark. The latest web page for certification information is now at:

<http://www.soilandwetlandscientistcertification.net/>

Phil McColley Land Judging Award – For several years now, WSPSS has donated \$300 each year to the WA State Land Judging Champions (high school FFA sponsored program) through the Phil McColley Land Judging Award. Phil McColley was a founding member of WSPSS and this award was designated in his memory for his long years of service to our society and his dedication to soil education outreach and development of the soil science profession. Recipients utilize the award for travel to the National Land Judging Competition (<http://www.landjudging.com/>) held each year in Oklahoma.

Ed Brincken Scholarship Fund – For the past two years WSPSS has provided a full scholarship (\$300) to the Natural Resources Youth Camp (<http://www.nryc.org/>) so that a deserving Washington student can attend the week long summer camp focusing on natural resources, including soil science! Ed Brincken was a long time WSPSS member and he served for many years on the WSPSS Board. This scholarship was designated as a tribute to his dedication to soil education outreach.

Education Outreach General Fund – Funds from this designation have been used for the past several years to provide a \$50 award to the middle or high school student with the best soil related project at the annual Washington State Science and Engineering Fair (<http://www.wssef.org/>). In the past year, funds have also been used to pay for WSPSS representation at partner society meetings in an effort to broaden the exposure to our society and the services offered by our members.

WSPSS Upcoming Event

7th Annual WSPSS Winter Meeting – 9AM March 4th, 2011

Contact toby_soils@yahoo.com for more information. We are looking for presenters and posters covering a wide variety of topics. Please feel free to submit a topic and present your material. We will be giving an update on the licensing effort, soil education outreach activities, Summer Tour 2011, and of course the regular WSPSS business meeting. **Free parking & 4 CPSS/CPSC CEU's for attending. \$10 registration fee (excluding students and presenters), payable at the door, lunch included.**

WSPSS Board Member Nomination Needed

This year the WSPSS Board is looking for a nominee for President-elect. If you have someone to nominate, or would like to volunteer yourself, please contact Toby to submit the name to the Board. We will pose a vote to the membership as soon as possible. The President-elect position has been vacant for a year now and the current Board sincerely hopes we can add a new face to the mix in the very near future!

2009 WASHINGTON STATE LAND JUDGING CONTEST

The Spokane County Land Judging Contest, sponsored by the Spokane County Conservation District (SCCD), was held October 13, 2010 at Walters Fruit Ranch in Green Bluff, WA. The weather could not have been better. The Green Bluff location proved to be very challenging this year.

Twenty FFA teams from 8 schools and 6 counties competed in the land and home site judging contest. One hundred students individually evaluated four different sites for it's suitability to raise crops or potential use as a home site based on factors such as soil texture, permeability, erosion, flooding, frost-free days, precipitation, and water table. The students must also measure the depth of a pit without the aid of a ruler or tape measure, and determine the sites slope with and without the use of instruments. Each site is then placed in a land class where vegetative, mechanical, and chemical recommendations can be made to fit the purpose of the site in evaluating the adaptability of the land for various purposes including farming, range management, forestry, and home site development.

Soil Scientists Chandra Neils from Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Eric Choker from the Spokane County Conservation District judged the soils. Volunteers: SCCD staff Ben Peterson and Dan Ross, Lindsay Krug, and Stacey Selcho, 8 advisors, and bus drivers with the contest. Awards were presented by Eric Choker to Individual high score winners and top five teams. Walters Fruit Ranch: owner and operators Mark and Jason Morrell provided the location. Jason Morrell also dug the pits for the contest.

Congratulations to all the winners and good luck at the state contest being held in Adams county October 27, 2010.

Schools attending: Cheney, Deer Park, Garfield Palouse, Tekoa, Prosser, Rosalia, Ritzville, and Springdale

**2010 Spokane County Land Judging Contest
Team Placement**

<u>Place</u>	<u>School/Team</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>School/Team</u>
1st,	Prosser (Team 1)	6th	Davenport (Team 1)
2nd	Prosser (Team 2)	7th	Rosalia (Team 2)
3rd	Garfield-Palouse	8th	Rosalia (Team 3)
4th	Tekoa (Team 1)	9th	Tekoa (Team 2)
5th	Rosalia (Team 1)	10th	Davenport (Team 2)

**2010 Spokane Count Land Judging Contest
Winning Team
Prosser**



From Left to Right: Tyson Rafferty, Laura Pearson, Rodrigo Bonilla, Nate Stice and Angelica Orta

2010 Spokane County Land Judging Contest High Score Winners

1st Place, Tyson Rafferty, Prosser
2nd Place, Angelica Orta, Prosser
3rd Place, Rodrigo Bonilla, Prosser
4th Place, Corey Schultz, Tekoa
5th Place, Itzel Mireles, Prosser
6th Place, Lily Mireles, Prosser
7th Place, Nate Stice, Prosser
8th Place, Laura Pearson, Prosser
9th Place, Derek Bosch, Gar-Pal

Eric Choker
Soil Scientist
Spokane County Conservation District

SOMETHING FUN CALL FISHING

There is some space left so did not want to waste it. Besides we cannot be serious and work all the time. So here are two fishing photos showing a catch of yellow fin tuna, yellow tails and wahoo caught this year south of Baja California.



Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to all the WSPSS Members

WSPSS

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Mailing Label Area

WSPSS on the web
www.ieway.com/wspss

WSPSS NEWSLETTER is the official newsletter produced and distributed by the Washington Society of Professional Soil Scientist. It is produced and issued 4 times per calendar year (March, June, September, and December).

Deadline for news and other publishable material is the end of the month preceding publication. Articles submitted are subject to editing and are published on a space available basis. We encourage contributions from any of our members. **Send dues, membership applications and other information to WSPSS, P.O. Box 247, Mount Vernon, WA 98273. The web page for WSPSS is www.ieway.com/wspss.**

Articles submitted for publishing in the WSPSS Newsletter must meet the following minimum requirements.

1. Use the **Normal, Times New Roman Font**. Use **Font Size 12** for article titles and author names. Use **Font Size 10** for the body of the text and photo captions. Also, justify your article.
2. Indent the first line of each paragraph and have a line spacing of 1.5.
3. Send photos or figures and the captions for them separate from the article. Send photos as JPEG images if at all possible. Be sure to identify your photos so the editor can put the right captions with the right photo.

Submit articles for publication in the WSPSS Newsletter and comments to wdploggy@olyopen.com.

Editor: W. David Loggy, CPSS