



**Soil and Water Conservation Society  
New Mexico Chapter**  
P.O. Box 2142, Albuquerque, NM 87102

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Spring 2008

**From the Chapter President**

It is with much excitement that I take on the role of Chapter President. I want to thank Steve Kadas for the work that we accomplished this last year. I hope to tap into Steve's expertise and look forward to working with the chapter members in accomplishing things like field days, tours and workshops.

SWCS has a lot to offer. As we grow and gain new and younger members, the SWCS can provide people with many opportunities for training, leadership experience and networking. With the National Conference this year in Tucson, Arizona, it can provide our new members with lot of experience for their future. I am looking forward to Tucson, and hoping that many members have a chance to attend.

It is my pleasure to serve as your president. I want to invite all members to consider attending chapter activities and taking an active part in the activities. If you have any questions or suggestions please feel free to contact me. I look forward to this next year and building on the success of the past.

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*NM Chapter Newsletter  
Please submit articles to  
[carol.feeney@nm.nacdnet.net](mailto:carol.feeney@nm.nacdnet.net)  
Welcome to Carol Feeney  
as our Newsletter Editor!*

**2008 Calendar of Events**

**March 14**

SWCS Planning Meeting, NRCS state office, Albuquerque

**March 15**

Whitfield site planting field day Belen, NM

**April 18 -19**

NM Envirothon Competition, Ruidoso, NM

**July 28-August 3**

Canon National Envirothon Competition, Flagstaff, AZ

**July 26-30**

National SWCS Meeting, Tucson, AZ

**Election of 2008 Officers**

President - Paul Vainio  
President-Elect – vacant  
Treasurer - Linda Scheffe  
Secretary - Jean Foster  
Region 1 Representative -Shawn Hardeman  
Region 2 Representative Mick O'Neill  
Region 5 Representative Robert Abercrombie  
Steve Kadas remains on the Executive Board as Past President.



## **Carbon storage: a New Conservation Technology**

New farming practices are being investigated to solve the problem of an overabundance of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. Farmers are profiting from storing carbon in their fields and crops and by producing ingredients for bio-fuel, which recycles atmospheric carbon, as opposed to introducing new carbon from fossil fuel.

The process of storing carbon is called *carbon sequestration*. Terrestrial carbon sequestration binds atmospheric carbon into plants and soils.

One practice that farmers are beginning to employ, called “no till” is to leave chaff on the ground after harvesting. Keeping the soil covered reduces wind and water erosion, builds soil volume and improves soil structure, making it better able to hold carbon.

Farmers have traditionally tilled the ground because tilling introduces oxygen to the soil. The oxygen increases the activity of organisms that break down organic matter. “Bugs” release the stored carbon dioxide from plants back into the air and make nutrients available for plants in the short term. Over time however, continually tilled soils become depleted of nutrients.

Tilling improves water infiltration in the short term, but after a few seasons a hardpan layer begins to form below the tilled soil layer. Waterlogged top soil gets washed away during heavy storms.

By not tilling the ground a farmer has better nutrient management and conserves the fertile top soil. Improving the quality of the soil increases its capacity to store carbon. Farmers can also plant perennial crops, pasture, and trees which lock the carbon in the biomass for a period of years. The amount of carbon that can be stored by these practices is substantial and measurable. The farmer benefits from terrestrial carbon sequestration with financial compensation, improved nutrient management, and by economizing on fuel, time, and equipment costs associated with tilling.

### **Carbon Credit Trading**

Farmers earn carbon credits through a carbon trading system, which amounts to cash. Contracts are made between farmers and

greenhouse gas-producing industries. These contracts involve calculating how much pollution is produced by a given company and how much carbon is sequestered by a given farm operation. Each ton of sequestered carbon earns one carbon credit which is “banked” by an administrating agency. In the U.S., the Chicago Climate Exchange trades a producer’s aggregated acreage of carbon as blocks of credit for shares bought by companies that emit carbon and other greenhouse gases. The enrolled farmer is compensated for the stored carbon by the gas-emitting industry. The system generates immediate, cost effective emissions reduction and other environmental benefits including wildlife habitat.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Bill has set aside funds for innovation grants which can include carbon sequestration operations. In 2008, for the first time in history, the Farm Bill includes bio-fuel producers as eligible recipients of its programs. The carbon market in the U.S. however, is not yet fully sanctioned by the government. The Chicago Climate Exchange is the U.S.’s only carbon unit trading system. It provides financial incentives for voluntary, legally binding conservation to reduce emissions with offsets. The term “offset” applies to saving carbon in order to offset carbon emitted by fuel industries.

A carbon sink occurs when sequestration is greater than release. The U. S. landscape is a carbon sink. The landscape can sequester more than it emits. This offsets about 15% of U.S. emissions caused from energy. However, overall sequestration in the U. S. has been declining because of increased harvest, land use changes, and maturing forests. There is a finite amount of carbon that can be sequestered before saturation is reached. At this point, maintenance is important in order to prevent carbon from being released. Mature trees do not continue to take on carbon. US agricultural soils are modest carbon sinks but they can be managed to store many times more than they presently do.

**New Mexico Students to Take Part in 2008 Canon Envirothon for the First Time**

*“Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources” is the theme for 2008*

How does recreation affect our natural resources? New Mexico high school students will explore this question in the 2008 Canon Envirothon in Ruidoso, on April 18-19 where they will participate in a two day outdoor competition. Students will be challenged to analyze the complex relationships between social, economic, and environmental impacts of recreation on our natural resources. Topics will include aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and current environmental issues. The competition will involve developing a resource management plan for the Forest Service, water and soil chemical analysis, field trips, workshops, and testing the knowledge they gain through this process.

The New Mexico Envirothon encourages students to think for themselves about real life environmental stewardship issues, and to

problem solve in a team setting. The outdoor portion of the competition will require students to visit field stations and conduct investigations. The field work will be followed by testing their learning with short answer, multiple choice and true-false questions. The problem-solving section of the competition will involve analyzing a real-world resource problem in which students will develop a management strategy and present it to a panel of judges.

The winning team will go to Flagstaff to compete at the national level in July, for awards and \$35,000 in scholarships.

This is New Mexico’s first year as a participant in the Canon Envirothon. The NM SWCS is funding the team T-shirts this year.

All of our students are winners and deserve to be enriched in their fields of interest. If you know any junior natural scientists, think ahead to 2009 and send them to the Envirothon (or at least to the New Mexico Envirothon website):

[www.nmenvirothon.com](http://www.nmenvirothon.com)

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**National SWCS Annual Conference in Tucson, Arizona July 26-30 2008**

The Arizona SWCS will be hosting the national conference for the SWCS this summer in Tucson, and they are inviting the New Mexico chapter to help with logistics, moderating, and other duties. The Arizona Chapter especially wants a strong New Mexico presence and encourages all members of the New Mexico Chapter to attend.

The conference will offer many networking opportunities such as roundtable lunches, Social Night at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, exhibitors and poster sessions, tours and field trips, and workshops.

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Workshop topics will include Soil Resources and Management, Soil Resource Assessment, Soil Resource Management and Conservation, Water Resources and Management, Conservation in Urban Settings, Adaptive Management of Conservation Efforts, Conservation Education, Conservation Tools and Technologies, and Conservation and Environmental Policy and Program Design.

The meeting will be held at the JW Marriott Starr Pass Hotel. To reserve a room, call the hotel at 1-888-527-8989 or your reservations [online](#) through the SWCS website. Register for the conference before June 16 to avoid late registration fees.

**NM Winter SWCS Meeting**

The Annual Winter Meeting was held the evening of January 25 at the Chama River Brewing Company in Albuquerque. Everyone enjoyed the social hour and the following

dinner, sponsored by the New Mexico Chapter of the SWCS. Steve Kadas led self-introductions and welcomed new members, giving them an overview of the SWCS and ideas for how they can be involved with the

NM Chapter. He thanked the executive board members and committee chairs and handed out gifts of locally made pottery to them as well as the new members. After election results were announced Steve passed the title of president over to Paul Vainio. Members came from all parts of New Mexico to catch up on chapter plans and projects for 2008.

### **Whitfield Riparian Restoration Field Day March 15, 2008**

The New Mexico SWCS will assist with the upcoming spring planting day for the Whitfield Wetland Reserve project in Belen on March 15th at 9:00 am. Our chapter has participated the past two years, planting over 1500 trees on the site. Please come and enjoy the day with a group of volunteers. In 20 years you can revisit this site and show your kids or grandkids, "I did that!" Call or email Steve Kadas, Jean Foster or Paul Vainio to join our carpooling effort and/or to get directions to the site.



### **Spring SWCS Meeting**

The New Mexico Chapter of the SWCS will hold its Spring Business Meeting in the downstairs meeting room of the USDA building on Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm. The building is located at 6200 Jefferson NE. Discussion will include the John Werner Scholarship, National Meeting in Tucson, Riparian Workshop ,Annual Plan ,By-Laws, Summer meeting Ruidoso, State Soil, Energy workshop, Envirothon, Sandia Mountain Tributary Dam tour, Newsletter. All members are welcome to attend this meeting; we plan to keep it to two hours.

### **Soil & Water Conservation Society NM Chapter Officers**

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