

*Sustaining Our Iowa Land (SOIL):
Past, Present and Future of Iowa's Soil and
Water Conservation Policy*



*Olmsted Center, Drake University
Des Moines, Iowa
November 19-20, 2015*

Greetings and Welcome to Drake University!

On behalf of the faculty and students of the Drake Law School I want to thank you for participating in our Iowa SOIL 2015 conference. As you will see in this program we have assembled an outstanding line-up of speakers and moderators to address issues relating to soil and water conservation policy. Thank you to all the speakers for your willingness to be part of this effort. A special thank you also goes to Dr. Mark Rasmussen and Mary Adams, and their team at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at ISU for supporting Drake's research on soil conservation and sustainable land tenure. I also want to thank our many other sponsors - who are listed on the back pages of the program - for supporting this effort. We all owe thanks to Matt Russell, the Resilient Agriculture Coordinator for the Center – and our student assistant Anna VanWaardhuizen - for their hard work and dedication in completing the many tasks involved in this undertaking. Finally, a special thank you to Kerri Sorrel and Phong Duong of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for designing our conference logo!

In the grant application for this initiative, I wrote, “There is a need and opportunity for Iowa and our leaders to examine the content, performance and future of laws and policies relating to soil and water conservation. Our ability to develop and support a truly sustainable agricultural system and economy can not be achieved without concerted efforts to address the continuing realities of excessive soil loss and water quality degradation that exist in many parts of the state. The year 2015 presents an important opportunity to evaluate the success and progress of laws and policies on soil and water conservation and identify our future needs.”

Seventy-five years ago Iowa adopted the soil and water conservation law creating our conservation districts. Thirty-five years ago the Iowa Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the districts' authority to enforce soil loss limits for all Iowa landowners. Thirty years ago Congress enacted the milestone Conservation Title of the 1985 farm bill, charting a new course for the nation's soil conservation efforts. This forum is designed to give stakeholders from across the state the opportunity to consider how well the goals of conservation, stewardship, and sustainability are being met – and to discuss how the institutions and policy approaches we use to address soil and water conservation in Iowa and the nation may need to evolve to address a series of new issues and challenges shaping agriculture. I look forward to learning a great deal over the next two days – and hope you find this to be an important contribution to Sustaining Our Iowa Land.

Sincerely, Neil Hamilton

Dwight Opperman Chair, Professor of Law and Director of the Agricultural Law Center



Conference at a Glance

Thursday, November 19

- 8:00–8:40 Registration and Coffee, hosted by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- 8:45–9:00 Welcome and Overview, Prof. Neil Hamilton, conference organizer
- 9:00–10:15 Session One–Iowa’s Soil Conservation Reality
- 10:15–10:35 Networking break, hosted by Bob Riley and Energy Feed Company
- 10:35–12:00 Session Two–Conservation Innovation, Future Opportunities,
- 12:00–1:20 Lunch with keynote speaker.
- 1:20–2:50 Session Three–Federal Conservation Programs–Context for Change,
- 2:50–3:10 Break, hosted by Practical Farmers of Iowa
- 3:10–5:00 Session Four–Conservation and Farmers: Soil Stewardship on the Land
- 5:30–6:30 Reception, hosted by Dickison, Mackaman, Tyler, & Hagen PC
- 6:30 Dinner, featuring the **Stewards of Iowa’s Land (SOIL) Awards**

Friday, November 20

- 7:45–8:15 Breakfast, hosted by Soil and Water Conservation Society
- 8:20–8:40 Welcome
- 8:40–9:55 Session Five–Soil Conservation and Land Tenure
- 10:00–10:15 Break, hosted by Iowa Soybeans Association
- 10:15–10:40 Special Guest: Jason Weller, Chief, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- 10:40–12:00 Session Six–Conservation Funding: New Opportunities to Link Conservation and Water Quality
- 12:00–1:15 Lunch, with keynote speaker
- 1:20–3:20 Session Seven–Closing Panel–A Theory of Change for Iowa’s Soil Conservation Policy,

Thursday, November 19—Day One

- 8:00–8:40 Registration and Coffee, hosted by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- 8:45–9:00 Welcome and Overview, Prof. Neil Hamilton, conference organizer
- 9:00–10:15 Session One—Iowa’s Soil Conservation Reality
Moderator: **Mark Ackelson**, former President, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- **Prof. Richard Cruse** ISU–Water Center–*The Real Numbers on Iowa’s Soil Loss*
 - **Duane Sand**–*Are Iowa’s Soil Conservation Institutions up to the Challenge?*
 - **Prof. Neil Hamilton**–*Iowa’s Soil Law: Standards of Conduct or Regulation?*
- 10:15–10:35 Networking break, hosted by Bob Riley and Energy Feed Company
- 10:35–12:00 Session Two—Conservation Innovation, Future Opportunities,
Moderator: **Jennifer Zwagerman** Associate Director, Drake Agriculture Law Center
- **Roger Wolf**–*Iowa Soybean Association: Leading Farmer Driven Conservation*
 - **Tom Buman** Agren, Carroll–*New Technologies for Soil Conservation*
 - **Jim Gulliford** Executive Director, Soil and Water Conservation Society–*Cover Crops: How Conservation and Economics Can Drive Economic Agronomic Change*
 - **Dr. J. Arbuckle** ISU–*Iowa Farmers’ Perspectives on Nutrient Loss Reduction and Soil Health*
 - **Clare Lindahl** (CDI)–*Innovative Funding for Conservation District Work*
 - **Steve Bruere** President, Peoples Company–*Incorporating Sustainability into Land Management*
- 12:00–1:20 Lunch hosted by Peoples Company–Keynote Speaker: Dr. Dennis Keeney, *Iowa’s Conservation Leadership—Where are We Now? Where are We Headed?*
- 1:20–2:50 Session Three—Federal Conservation Programs—Context for Change,
Moderator **Jim Guilliford**, Executive Director, Soil and Water Conservation Society
- **Max Schnepf** (former NRCS staff)–*Implementation of the Conservation Title in the 1985 Farm Bill: Lessons Learned*
 - **Craig Cox** (Vice President, Environmental Working Group)–*Conservation Compliance and Federal Programs*
 - **Mark Rasmussen** (Director, Leopold Center, ISU)–*Role of Livestock in Conservation Systems*
- 2:50–3:10 Break, hosted by Practical Farmers of Iowa
- 3:10–5:00 Session Four—Conservation and Farmers: Soil Stewardship on the Land
Moderator **Aaron Lehman**, Iowa Farmer’s Union
- **Dr. Jerry Hatfield** USDA-ARS, National Lab for Agriculture and Environment–*Soil Health, Climate Change and Challenges for Conservation Policy*
 - **Matt Russell** Resilient Agriculture Coordinator, Drake Agricultural Law Center–*Using Conservation Programs to Build Farm Wealth*
 - **Liz Garst** Whiterock Conservancy, Coon Rapids–*A Farmer’s and Landowner’s View on Soil Stewardship*
 - **Tim Smith** Eagle Grove, Farmer and Iowa Conservationist of the Year–*Putting Cover Crops and Soil Conservation into the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy*
 - **Wayne Fredericks** Osage, Farmer and President, Iowa Soybean Association–*How Well is the Iowa Watershed Approach Working?*
- 5:30–6:30 Reception – Hosted by Dickinson, Mackaman, Tyler, & Hagen PC
- 6:30 Dinner – featuring the **Stewards of Iowa’s Land (SOIL) Awards** –Ten Iowans will be recognized for their long-time leadership and contributions to protecting Iowa’s land and water resources.

Friday, November 20—Day Two

- 7:45–8:15 Breakfast, hosted by Soil and Water Conservation Society
- 8:20–8:40 Welcome, **James Gillespie**, Director, Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - *The Iowa Nutrient Strategy and Conservation*
- 8:40–9:55 Session Five—Soil Conservation and Land Tenure
Moderator: **Teresa Opheim**—Executive Director, Practical Farmers of Iowa
- **Dr. Mike Duffy** ISU—*How Changes in Iowa Land Tenure Impact Conservation*
 - **Edward Cox** Centerville—*Improving Farm Tenancy Agreements to Promote Conservation*
 - **Dr. Jean Eells** E Resources Group—*Role of Women Landowners in Conservation Adoption*
 - **Joe McGovern** President, INHF—*Private Landowners and Permanent Land Protection*
 - **Ray Gaesser** Former President, American Soybean Association—*Assisting Landowners with Conservation on Large Farms*
- 10:00–10:15 Break, hosted by Iowa Soybean Association
- 10:15–10:40 Special Guest - Jason Weller, Chief, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service—*Communicating Conservation Opportunities to Landowners and Farmers*
- 10:40–12:00 Session Six—Conservation Funding: New Opportunities to Link Conservation and Water Conservation and Quality
Moderator: **Dan Looker**, Successful Farming
- **Sen. David Johnson** Iowa Senate—*Iowa's Water and Land Legacy and State Funding for Natural Resource Protection*
 - **Mark Ackelson** Board, Land Trust Alliance—*Using Bond Referenda to Fund Resource Protection—A National View*
 - **Matt Carstens** Vice President for Crop Nutrients, United Suppliers, Ames—*Private Conservation and Supply Chains*
 - **Dustin Miller** General Council, Iowa League of Cities—*Connecting Water Quality Incentives and Local Conservation Efforts*
- 12:00–1:15 Lunch, hosted by Wells Fargo—Keynote Speaker—**Patricia Beneke**, Regional Director and Representative, United Nations Environment Program—*An International Perspective on Iowa's Conservation Policy: 2015 International Year of Soils.*
- 1:20–3:00 Session Seven—Closing Panel—A Theory of Change for Iowa's Soil Conservation Policy
Facilitated by **Prof. Neil Hamilton**
- **Sarah Carlson**, Practical Farmers of Iowa
 - **Bob Lynch**, Humboldt County SWCD Commissioner
 - **Bob Riley**, President, Feed Energy Company
 - **Craig Cox**, Environmental Working Group
 - **Dr. Jerry Hatfield**, National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment
 - **Francis Thicke**, Farmer, Fairfield
 - **Jim Gulliford**, Soil and Water Conservation Society

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Mark Ackelson joined the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation as one of its original staff in 1980, served as president 1994-2013 and retired to emeritus status. The mission of INHF is to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife. Thanks in large part to the strong board, staff and volunteer team efforts this nonprofit, accredited conservation organization has helped protect nearly 150,000 acres of Iowa's wetlands, prairies, woodlands, watersheds and trail corridors. He has received numerous awards and recognitions during his career including the Alfred LaGasse Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects for leadership in natural resources conservation, the prestigious Kingsbury Browne National Conservation Leadership Award from the Land Trust Alliance and the Trails Advocacy Award from American Trails. Mark graduated with honors from North Dakota State School of Science in Civil Engineering Technology and with distinction from Iowa State University in Landscape Architecture and Forestry.



Dr. J. Gordon Arbuckle Jr. is associate professor and extension sociologist at Iowa State University. His research and extension efforts focus on improving the environmental and social performance of agricultural systems. His primary area of interest is farmer decision making, especially as it pertains to soil and water quality. Other areas of interest include climate change and agriculture, non-operator landownership, and pesticide resistance management. He is co-director of the Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll, an annual survey of Iowa farmers.



Steve Bruere is the president of Peoples Company, an Iowa-based land brokerage with a diversified offering of land management, land appraisal and land investing services in eight Midwest states. He leads a 60-person team of brokers, managers and appraisers serving Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Montana, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Illinois and Mississippi. Steve grew up actively involved on his family's corn and soybean farm in Central Iowa. He earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Northern Iowa before joining Peoples. Steve is active on several boards including the Strategic Advisory Board for the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, the UNI Real Estate Program, past president of the Iowa Chapter of the Realtors Land Institute and currently serves as the co-chair of Partnership Water Task Force. In 2008, Steve spearheaded the launch of Peoples Company's annual Land Investment Expo bringing together major players in the land business and featuring high-profile speakers such as Jim Rogers, T. Boone Pickens, Donald Trump.



Since 1982, **Tom Buman** has built insight and experience in conservation planning that allows him to conceive innovative tools that benefit both agriculture and natural resources. Tom leads concept development and scope of work development for Agren, and continuously challenges scientists, programmers, and subject matter experts working on Agren projects to achieve a higher level of innovation. Prior to founding Agren in 1996, he spent 14 years with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Iowa, first as a Soil Conservationist and later as a District Conservationist.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Sarah Carlson joined Practical Farmers of Iowa staff in the fall of 2007. Sarah is the Midwest Cover Crop Research Coordinator. She helps transfer agronomic research about cover crops through articles, blogs and presentation materials while working to improve the support for cover crop research. She also serves as an agronomist on the staff transferring ideas for solutions to integrated crop and livestock concerns from farmers' stories, results from on-farm research projects and her own knowledge as a trained agronomist. Sarah co-majored in Biology and Geography at Augustana College, graduating in 2001. Following graduation Sarah joined the Peace Corps as an Ag-business and Ag Extension volunteer serving in the Ecuador for 2 1/2 years. She returned to the Midwest in 2004 and began her Masters Program co-majoring in Sustainable Agriculture and Crop Production/Physiology in Iowa State's Agronomy Department. She graduated in the spring of 2008 with an MS.



Matt Carstens has an extensive agricultural background spanning the last 17 years. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Iowa State University where he majored in agricultural business with a management and sales emphasis. Matt interned and was hired by American Cyanamid where he performed in a sales role and later as a Market Development Supervisor. He was then promoted to the role of District Business Manager with BASF. From there, he moved into a Director of Business Development role with Rosen's Inc. and Sales Manager with Helena Chemical Company before joining United Suppliers, Inc.

He and his wife, Shanda, have three children and make their home in Johnston, IA. Matt enjoys spending time with his family and friends when he's not working for the United Suppliers Members and Customers.



Craig Cox began his career in conservation by joining the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 1977 as a field biologist. Since then, he has worked for the National Academy of Sciences, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and as Executive Director of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. He joined EWG in 2008 and leads the organization's research and advocacy work in agriculture, renewable energy and climate change. He also directs EWG's Midwest Office in Ames, Iowa. He has degrees in wildlife ecology and agricultural economics from the University of Minnesota. He is an avid fly fisherman, hunter and hiker.



Edward Cox is an agricultural law attorney with Orsborn, Milani, Mitchell & Goedken, L.L.P. in Centerville, Iowa. From 2010 to 2014, Ed was staff attorney at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center. He has written several publications on land tenure and beginning farmer policy and has given presentations on these topics to farmers, landowners, and their advisors. Ed received his Juris Doctorate from Drake University Law School and earned a Certificate in Food and Agricultural Law. Ed is licensed to practice law in Iowa and Missouri.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Dr. Richard M. Cruse is a professor in the Department of Agronomy at Iowa State University where he has research, teaching and extension responsibilities focusing on soil management; he is also Director of the Iowa Water Center. He received his BS degree from Iowa State University and his MS and PhD degrees from the University of Minnesota. Cruse is a fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and the Soil Science Society of America, and is currently the president of the US National Institutes for Water Resources.



Dr. Mike Duffy is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Economics. Dr. Duffy is currently a private consultant for land values, land use, land investments, farm transitions and other aspects of farmland. While at Iowa State Dr. Duffy was responsible for the annual land value survey, Iowa Farmland Ownership survey, and cost of crop production estimates. He was an Extension Economist and served as the Director of the Beginning Farmer Center and as Director for the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture.



Dr. Jean Eells is an independent contractor, with a Ph. D in Agricultural Education from Iowa State University. Her main areas of expertise include program evaluation, education and communications, project management, and group facilitation. Her research has been on conservation outreach and women landowners.



Wayne Fredericks and his wife Ruth farm in Mitchell County just south west of Osage. They raise corn and soybeans in a 50-50 rotation and have been a long time users of no-till and strip-till. Their passion is conservation and working to build healthy, productive soil. They have spent many years working with the ISA On-Farm Network doing trials, as well as with ISA Environmental Programs and Services to implement positive environmental practices on their farm. They work to find what productive, profitable, sustainable crop production practices work while keeping soil, water and air quality at the forefront of their operation. Wayne currently serves as President of the Iowa Soybean Association and as a Director for the American Soybean Association.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Since 1997, **Ray Gaesser** has been a leader in the Iowa and national Soybean Associations, having served as president of the Iowa Soybean Association and currently serving as Chairman of the American Soybean Association. Ray also serves on the National Cover Crop Council and the National Climate Smart Agriculture steering committee

The Gaesser farm has a long history of early adapting with innovations in agriculture, and caring for the land. Ray grew up on a small farm in Indiana. He and his wife, Elaine, were married in 1977 and moved near Lenox in Southwest Iowa where they began farming. They have two children, Jennifer and Christopher, who is an agronomist and farms with Ray and Elaine.



Liz Garst Liz Garst manages four ag banks and roughly 4000 acres of diversified farmland for her family. She serves on Whiterock Conservancy's Board, which stewards an additional 4000 acres donated by the Garsts. Whiterock works on sustainable ag initiatives, as do the Garsts, who continue a tradition of innovation ... a tradition made famous by Roswell Garst, Liz's grandfather. Past experiences include a MS in Agricultural Economics from Michigan State, Peace Corps Colombia, a MBA from Harvard with a focus in agri-business, work as a bond trader for the World Bank, Business Manager of the Garst Seed company and Bank President. Civic work has included the Iowa Natural Resources Commission, Nature Conservancy and currently the Iowa Environmental Council and Humanities Iowa Speakers Program. She has attended the annual ISU Water and Soil Management Conferences for many years and has an interest in policy. She has become passionate about soil.



James Gillespie has worked for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS/DSC) for over 30 years. He started as a Field Representative in western Iowa, became the Bureau Chief of Field Services and now serve as the Director. He taught Vocational Agriculture for the Earlham Community School in Earlham, Iowa, for 4 years before coming to work for the state. Grew up in western Nebraska, attended high school in Creston, Iowa and also attended Jr. College in Creston. He graduated with a B.S. in Vocational Agriculture from Northwest Missouri State University from Maryville, Missouri. He and his wife Terri live on acreage in Earlham; have four grown children, six grandchildren and their families all live in Iowa.



Jim Gulliford serves as Executive Director of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, a professional society dedicated to promoting the science and art of natural resource conservation. Before joining the Soil and Water Conservation Society, He served 7.5 years as EPA Assistant Administrator for the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, and Regional Administrator for the Kansas City Regional Office. He directed soil and water conservation programs for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship from 1982-2001. He began his natural resources management career with a 1973 BS in forestry management and a 1975 MS in forestry economics and marketing; both from Iowa State University.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Prof. Neil D. Hamilton, is the Dwight D. Opperman Chair of Law and Director of the Agricultural Law Center at Drake University Law School in Des Moines, Iowa. He has directed the Center since 1983. He is past-president of the American Agricultural Law Association (AALA) and has authored several books, including the nationally award winning *What Farmers Need to Know About Environmental Law* (1990) and the *Legal Guide to Direct Farm Marketing* (1999). He has conducted legal seminars throughout the U.S. and in twenty foreign countries. He was on the Advisory Board of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University from 1987 to 2008. He is on the boards of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Food Corps, and the Seed Savers Exchange. From 2000 to 2006 he chaired the Iowa Food Policy Council and today serves as an informal adviser to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. He has a B.S. from Iowa State Univ., 1976 in Forestry and Economics, and a J.D. from Univ. of Iowa. He and his wife Khanh own Sunstead Farm near Waukee, Iowa and raise produce and flowers for local restaurants.



Dr. Jerry L. Hatfield is the Laboratory Director of the USDA-ARS National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment and Director of the Midwest Climate Hub in Ames, Iowa. His research focuses on quantifying the interactions among the components of the soil-plant-atmosphere system to quantify resilience of cropping systems to climate change and development of techniques to quantify plant response to the environment. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America and Past-President of the American Society of Agronomy and member of the American Meteorological Society, American Geophysical Union and Soil and Water Conservation Society. He is the recipient of numerous awards including ARS Hall of Fame in 2014 for his research on improving agriculture and environmental quality. He is the author or co-author of 417 refereed publications and the editor of 16 monographs.



Aaron Lehman is a fifth generation farmer from Polk County. His family farms approximately 600 acres of conventional and organic corn, soybeans, oats, and hay. Aaron serves numerous community and school organizations and is currently on the board of directors of the Iowa Farmers Union. He also serves on the advisory board of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. He and his wife Nicole have two children.



A native of West Branch, Iowa, **Senator David Johnson** now represents five counties in northwest Iowa. First elected in 1998 to the Iowa House, in 2002 he won a Senate seat he continues to hold. He is a member of the Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committee and previously served as Senate Agriculture Committee chairman. Sen. Johnson and Dick Dearden of Des Moines are cosponsors of a bill to fund the Iowa Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust.

Sen. Johnson's career has ranged from dairy farming to newspaper owner to camp manager of research expeditions to Antarctica and Greenland. The recipient of numerous awards and an advocate for responsible stewardship, he currently resides in Ocheyedan, site of the first state preserve.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Clare Lindahl started as Executive Director of Conservation Districts of Iowa in October, 2012. Conservation Districts of Iowa is a not for profit organization that supports the soil and water conservation work of the 500 elected Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners. Prior to this position Lindahl was a district employee with the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District in Davenport, Iowa where she implemented soil and water conservation on agricultural and urban land uses. Lindahl graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture and has received her Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Environmental Geographic Information Systems from Western Illinois University.



With his wife, Joan, **Dan Looker** served as a Peace Corps Volunteer working with owners of small scale farms in Colombia from 1969-71. His first job writing about agriculture was as the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska. He was the Farm Editor for the Lincoln, Nebraska Journal and Star during the farm debt crisis of the 1980s and was agribusiness writer at the Des Moines Register from 1988 to 1992 He then he joined Successful Farming as the magazine's business editor. He retired on October 2, 2015.



Robert Lynch has been farming for 38 years on land that has been in his family for over 100 years. He grows corn and soybeans using no-till on his soybeans and strip-tills corn. He was a ridge-tiller for 18 years and began strip-tilling five years ago. He has also implemented grassed waterways. This system of no-till and strip-till encourages living organisms that help feed crops. Bob has been implementing conservation practices on his farm to leave the soil in better shape for future generations of family farmers. Bob and his wife, Linda, farm with their son Jay. Bob has hosted field days on his farm, is a Humboldt County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner, as well as the Vice President for Conservation Districts of Iowa. He is involved with his local Lions Club and his church.



Joe McGovern is President of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a statewide land trust committed to protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife by partnering with private land-owners, public agencies and other organizations. Joe's background with Story County Conservation prepared him to serve as INHF Land Stewardship Director 1999-2013 and now as INHF President since 2013.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Dustin Miller is General Counsel for the Iowa League of Cities after serving two years as the Director of Government Affairs. He is responsible for the League's state legislative activities and providing legal guidance to member cities including federal and state regulatory work on environmental compliance issues. He works with member cities developing a nutrient offset system for compliance with the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy and in implementing split flow permit standards with the Iowa DNR. He worked in Washington DC in the Office of the Secretary of the USDA with Tribal Governments in multiple agency areas that included federal environmental compliance for large telecommunications and wastewater infrastructure projects and worked on the Crow Creek Sioux Reservation with a non-profit he founded with a law school colleague to spur economic development. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Iowa and his law degree with a certificate in Food & Agriculture Law. He was raised in Lacona (pop 363).



Teresa Opheim has been the Executive Director of Practical Farmers of Iowa since 2006. Previously, she served as the Executive Director of the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group. She also has worked at the Iowa Environmental Council, the Environmental Working Group and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Mark Rasmussen the current Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Prior to joining the Leopold Center, he served in managerial and research positions at the National Animal Disease Center, the USDA's Agricultural Research Service facility in Ames, Iowa; and at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Veterinary Medicine in Laurel, Maryland. Earlier in his career he farmed full-time in eastern Nebraska. Rasmussen is also a tenured professor in the Department of Animal Science at Iowa State. His professional and scientific expertise extends to various areas of agriculture, microbiology, food safety, animal health, animal nutrition, and antibiotic resistance. He holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture (1976) and a master's degree in animal science (1979) from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He earned a Ph.D. in microbiology (1986) from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a MBA (1996) from Iowa State.



Robert (Bob) G. Riley, Jr., has worked for more than 40 years in the fats and oil processing industry in many capacities. As CEO of Riley Resource Group, Bob is a proponent for balanced and sustainable systems, including agriculture, environment, innovation, business, and government. He works to create a synergy and manage polarities between many entities. With a unique background and lifelong interests in both agriculture and the environment, Bob frequently speaks to groups presenting a broad and balanced perspective.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Matt Russell is Resilient Agriculture Coordinator at Drake University Agricultural Law Center where he is responsible for projects relating to improving the opportunities in Iowa's agricultural and rural economy. He has worked on issues concerning retail agriculture, land tenure, conservation, climate change, farmer veterans, rural development, state food policy, and federal farm policy. Matt grew up on a family farm near Anita in Cass County and earned an M.S. in Rural Sociology from Iowa State University. Matt and his husband Patrick Standley operate Coyote Run Farm, a 110 acre farm in rural Lacona and direct market fresh produce, eggs, and beef. He serves on the Iowa Farm Service Agency State Committee of the USDA and the Marion County Development Commission.



Duane Sand is Floodplain Outreach Coordinator for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, where he coordinates development of flood risk management maps and materials for farms. Prior to this role, Duane directed INHF state appropriations work, federal farm policy work, and clean water projects. He recently served six years on the State Soil Conservation Committee. He did consulting work for private foundations and conservation groups for the ten years prior to INHF employment in 2008. Duane has been affiliated with INHF as an employee or consultant for all but three years since 1981. He worked for the USDA Soil Conservation Service for seven years prior to that. Duane and his wife Marilyn reside in Norwalk, Iowa.



Max Schnepf has spent five decades advocating for the conservation of land, water, and wildlife resources, nationally and internationally. He spent more than 30 years with the Soil and Water Conservation Society, editing that association's Journal of Soil and Water Conservation and conducting agricultural policy analyses and farm bill conservation program evaluations. In 1995 he joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture, first on loan and later as a permanent employee, to serve as a special assistant to the chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. During his tenure at USDA, he worked on the 1996 and later farm bills and as coordinator of USDA's National Conservation Buffer Initiative. Since his retirement in 2004, he has done consulting work for several national conservation organizations. He is an Iowa State University graduate with majors in journalism and fish and wildlife management.



Tim Smith farms 800 acres near Eagle Grove in north central Iowa. Tim has been involved farming the family Century farm since his early twenties. The crops grown are evenly split between corn and soybeans. Thirty-five acres of the farm is enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program. In 2011 Tim became involved with the M.R.B.I. program through the NRCS. 550 acres that are in the Boone River watershed, utilize cover crops, strip tillage, Prairie STRIIPs and nutrient management practices along with a bioreactor to reduce tile water nitrates. Through this involvement Tim began doing nitrogen rate and nitrogen source comparisons. In 2012 Tim received a Iowa Farm Environmental Leader award from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and in 2014 a "Good Steward Recognition" from the National Corn Growers Association" and the "Environmental Leader Award" from the Iowa Soybean Association.

Speakers, Moderators and Awardees



Francis Thicke with his wife Susan, owns and operates a 90-cow, grass-based, organic dairy near Fairfield, Iowa. They process their milk on the farm and market their dairy products through grocery stores and restaurants in Fairfield. Francis has a Ph.D. in soil fertility and has served as National Program Leader for Soil Science for the USDA-Extension Service in Washington, D.C.



Paul Willis founded and manages of Niman Ranch Pork Company. He also owns and operates the Willis Free Range Pig Farm in Thornton, Iowa, where he continues to work on the farm where he grew up. Together he and his daughter Sarah work with Niman Ranch to increase opportunities for traditional, sustainable and humane family farmers who raise pigs on open pasture and deeply bedded pens without the use of antibiotics. Paul has been the subject of numerous feature –length articles in such publications as the New York Times, the Boston Globe, The Iowan, Successful Farming, Vogue, Country Living, Bon Appetit, and Food & Wine to name a few. Paul is a member of the committee convened by the National Academy of Sciences that worked on the project, 21st Century Systems Agriculture; An Update of the 1989 NRC Report Alternative Agriculture.



Roger Wolf is the Director of Environmental Programs and Services for the Iowa Soybean Association and Executive Director of Agriculture’s Clean Water Alliance. Wolf provides agricultural leadership in organizations such as the Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance Management Committee, U.S. Water Alliance Board of Directors, and the 25x25 Climate Adaptation Working group. He has 26 years of agricultural resource management experience and holds a B.S. in Geography from the University of Iowa. He is co-owner of a diversified farm in Southern Iowa. He and his wife Anne have four children and reside in Cumming, Iowa.



Jennifer Zwagerman received a B.S. in Agriculture and Natural Resources Communications from Michigan State University. She worked in the beef industry before returning to school to focus on agricultural law and policy. She earned her J.D. from Drake Law School in 2004 and obtained her LL.M. in Agricultural Law from the University of Arkansas.

After serving as a law clerk to the Honorable David R. Hansen, 8th Circuit Court of Appeals, she returned to Des Moines as an associate at Faegre & Benson (n/k/a Faegre Baker Daniels) in the general litigation group, with a national practice in food and agricultural law. She left the firm in 2011 to serve as Drake Law’s director of career development, in addition to her work with the Agricultural Law Center. She is on the American Agricultural Law Association Board of Directors, ISBA’s Agricultural Law Section Council and the ISBA Rural Practice Committee.

Keynote Speakers



Patricia J. Beneke was appointed as the Director and Regional Representative for the UN Environment Programme's Regional Office for North America in May of 2014. Prior to that, she served as Senior Counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for nearly 20 years, specializing on legislation and oversight matters relating to energy policy, water resources, and environmental matters.

In addition, Ms. Beneke was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science in 1995, and served in that capacity until 2000. As Assistant Secretary, she played a leadership role with respect to several ecosystem restoration efforts, including those involving the Florida Everglades, the California-San Francisco Bay Delta, and the Platte River. In addition, she was responsible for programs of the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey. She was heavily involved in water resource issues and in initiatives to provide quality science for natural resource decision-making.

Early in her career, Ms. Beneke was an attorney at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She also handled environmental litigation as an attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice. In addition, Ms. Beneke served as the Associate Solicitor for Energy and Resources at the U.S. Department of the Interior. She has also worked in the private sector.

Ms. Beneke has taught natural resources law and policy on an adjunct basis at Harvard Law School, Columbia University Law School, the University of Virginia School of Law, the Georgetown University Law Center, and the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy. She holds a J.D. degree from Harvard Law School and a B.A. degree from Iowa State University.



Dennis R. Keeney is emeritus professor of Agronomy and Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering at Iowa State University. He has degrees in Soil Science from Iowa State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and was on the Soil Science and Water Chemistry faculties at UW-Madison from 1966–1988.

He was the first Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University from 1988 to 2000. He is past president of the Soil Science Society of America and the American Society of Agronomy and is a Fellow of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science.

Since his retirement from Iowa State in 2000, he has held positions as Senior Fellow for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis and the Department of Soil, Water and Climate, University of Minnesota, St. Paul. He has also served on the Boards of the Thomas Jefferson Agriculture Institute and Food and Water Watch. In 2008 he was appointed Visiting Scholar, Center for a Livable Future, Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Keeney and his wife Betty travel widely and are sometimes found in Ames, sometimes in Minneapolis, and sometimes elsewhere. He invites you to share with him the chronicle of his professional life in his memoir *The Keeney Place: A Place in the Heartland* available at www.TheKeeneyPlace.com.



Keynote Speakers



Jason Weller has served as Chief of NRCS since July 2013. As Chief, he oversees programs that help protect the environment, preserve our natural resources and improve agricultural sustainability through voluntary, private-lands conservation. He leads a staff of 11,500 employees across the country and manages a budget of about \$4 billion.

From December 2012 to July 2013, Jason served as Acting Chief of NRCS. Before assuming this role, he served as Acting Associate Chief for Conservation and as Chief of Staff where he worked alongside Chief Dave White and the agency's national and state leaders to plan and implement strategic conservation initiatives and conduct the annual business operations of the agency.

Prior to joining NRCS, Jason served as a staff member for the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture where he provided oversight and crafted bills to fund USDA programs and activities. He also served on the U.S. House Budget Committee where he helped construct the annual congressional budget for agriculture, environment and energy programs. Before that, Jason worked with the White House Office of Management and Budget where he assisted with the development and implementation of the budget for USDA conservation programs.

Before coming to Washington, DC, Jason worked for several years with the California State Legislature where he provided fiscal and policy recommendations on a variety of natural resource conservation and environmental protection issues.

Jason is a native of northern California. He earned his undergraduate degree from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and a graduate degree in public policy from the University of Michigan. Jason and his wife have two young daughters and live in Maryland.

Drake University Law School



different
by design

Educating lawyers in agricultural
law for over 30 years.

SOIL Awards



The ten recipients of the Stewards of Iowa's Land (SOIL) Awards are being honored for their significant contributions to sustainability and soil conservation. We are happy to recognize their achievements. Below are short biographies for our winners.

Mark Ackelson – spent his career working with individuals and organizations dedicated to permanently protecting land and vital natural features. As president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for over 20 years he helped INHF become one of the most successful land trusts in the USA. Under his tenure INHF protected over 100,000 acres of Iowa land, and thousands of farmers and landowners found new purpose in conserving soil and water resources. His national leadership in the rail-to-trails movement stands as a permanent monument to his vision and energy.

Dr. Richard Cruse – as one of the nation's leading academics examining the causes of soil erosion and the linkage between precipitation events and soil loss he has pioneered a better understanding of the costs and threats our nation faces when we treat our soil like dirt. His research and teaching on soil loss – using accurate and realistic measurements - is helping train and connect the next generation of soil scientists with the land and with the farmers and owners we must call on to steward these precious resources.

Liz Garst – as a member of perhaps Iowa's most prominent agrarian family – one long dedicated to land stewardship – she has been an ardent and effective voice for soil conservation and wise land use and protection. Through her service on state organizations, non-profit conservation groups – and through efforts with her family members in creating Whiterock Conservancy – the largest privately created land project in Iowa – she is inspiring other landowners to recognize a duty to the land and helping them understand the public's interest in sound land stewardship.

Dr. Dennis Keeney – from his early years on a central Iowa farm, through a long, illustrious academic career in soil science he grew to understand the importance of the Leopoldian land ethic and our need for an agricultural system premised on sustainability. As the first director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University he had the opportunity to develop the nation's leading research effort dedicated to these ideals – ones he continues to promote through his writing and advocacy.

Dan Looker – over a long career as one of our nation’s most respected voices in agricultural journalism he used the pages of Successful Farming to educate farmers, landowners, and policy makers about the need for conservation, and helped explain and promote the state and federal programs designed to protect soil and water. His writings often illuminated the innovative spirit, the strong family connection to the land, and the ideal of stewardship shared by generations of farmers all across the nation.

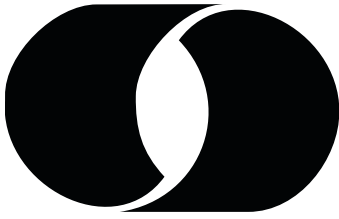
Teresa Opheim – Trained as a lawyer and environmentalist, she has helped guide the efforts of the hundreds of farm family members of Iowa’s most progressive and farmer-focused group – the Practical Farmers of Iowa. Under her leadership, PFI has expanded its reach and impact by continuing a focus on farmer-led and demonstrated research – much of it focused on conservation and land stewardship - and in so doing has helped build an organization inspiring and training the next generation of family farm leaders and advocates.

Duane Sand – Over a long career as the public policy specialist for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, he developed a reputation for an unsurpassed understanding of the operation of state and federal conservation and land protection programs, and especially how they are funded. His creativity and insight in the design of conservation programs, and his tireless efforts to help improve funding for conservation programs, helped lead to new initiatives protecting thousands of acres of land and harnessing millions of dollars in the service of soil conservation and land stewardship.

Max Schnepf – Over a long and respected career as a public servant he worked to improve and promote the nation’s soil conservation efforts. His contributions to the design and implementation of valuable national efforts such as the Conservation Reserve Program helped prevent billions of tons of soil loss and have led to the implementation of better conservation on millions of acres of farmland. His continuing efforts are helping challenge policy makers and conservationists to seek permanence and efficiency in how public funds are used to promote stewardship.

Paul Willis – As creator of the Niman Ranch Pork Company - a network of hundreds of family based hog farmers started in Iowa but now in many other states, his leadership and vision have helped make it possible for generations of farm families to continue raising livestock in humane and environmentally sustainable ways that respect the land and the animals. His commitment to nature and stewardship is reflected not just in this network of farmers but on his own beautifully restored wetland complex in Clarion County, an island of beauty known as the Dream Farm.

Roger Wolf – As the long time leader of environmental programs for the Iowa Soybean Association, he plays a vital role in helping farmers across Iowa understand the importance of protecting soil and water resources and of the opportunities to do so. His leadership has made ISA a state and national leader in promoting farmer-driven resource conservation and water quality protection. It has made him one of the most effective voices reminding the nation of the vital role farmers and landowners will need to play before any program designed to protect soil and water can be effective.



LEOPOLD CENTER

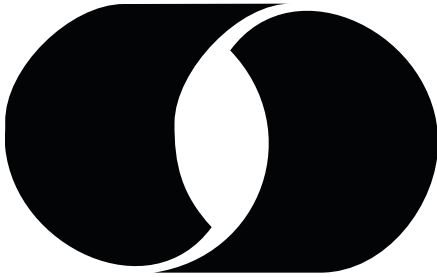


DICKINSON LAW



Thank you to all our exhibitors and sponsors!

Thank you to our lead sponsors!



LEOPOLD CENTER

**WELLS
FARGO**



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation



DICKINSONLAW



PEOPLESTM
C O M P A N Y

INNOVATIVE. REAL ESTATE. SOLUTIONS.



1865-2015



IOWA SOYBEAN
Association

Expanding Opportunities. Delivering Results. 