

Iowa Chapter Newsletter

Soil & Water Conservation Society
July 2025



Miranda Haes President's Report



*Miranda Haes,
Iowa SWCS Chapter
President*

Happy Summer, Iowa Chapter SWCS Members!

Welcome to July! Spring came and went quickly this year, but it gave us beautiful weather and ushered in summer in full swing. I

hope you're all staying cool during these warm, humid days.

I've now been serving as President of the Iowa Chapter for a little over six months. It's been a memorable experience—one I'll never forget. Each month, I've had the pleasure of meeting with our incredible Executive Committee to plan and organize events, and let me tell you—we've been busy! We've participated in several workshops and outreach events, proudly showcasing the benefits and impact of our Iowa Chapter.

We also received some exciting news last month: **our Chapter has been awarded the 2025 Outstanding Chapter Award by the SWCS Board of Directors!** This prestigious honor will be presented at the upcoming 80th SWCS International Annual Conference in Costa Mesa, California, on Tuesday, August 5th. We are beyond proud of this recognition and deeply

honored to be acknowledged in this way.

Speaking of the 80th SWCS Conference—have you registered yet? This year marks a momentous milestone for the conference, and the agenda is shaping up to be truly exciting. Two of our Iowa Chapter members will be presenting, highlighting the important conservation work happening right here in our state. We hope to see many of you there!

There's also been some movement within our Executive Committee. Please join me in welcoming our new President-Elect, **Kelsi Sieren**, and our new Central Region Representative, **Steve Konrady**. We're thrilled to have you both on board and look forward to collaborating with you throughout the remainder of the year. Exciting things are ahead!

Thank you to all our members for your continued support and dedication to conservation. We wouldn't be the **OUTSTANDING** chapter we are without you. Your passion and commitment are what make our chapter thrive.

Keep up the great work!

Warm regards,
Miranda Haes
President, Iowa Chapter SWCS

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From the CEO: Hello Iowa Members!

by Clare Lindahl



While SWCS is a national organization, the Iowa Chapter holds a special place in my heart — and not just because you show up twice a year to help care for the SWCS Headquarters building and grounds in Ankeny, Iowa (though we're incredibly grateful for that!). Keep an eye out for our fall clean-up date,

and remember, Headquarters is your house! Let us know if you'd like to stop by or host a meeting here.

I'm proud to be an Iowa member of SWCS — and have been for twice as long as I've been CEO. I also served as a chapter leader in Iowa for over a decade. That experience shaped who I am, and Iowa continues to lead the way with the highest membership numbers and an outstanding showing in the SWCS Emerging Leader Program.

Speaking of Emerging Leaders — we're accepting applications for the next class starting July 15! Learn more here: [swcs.org/get-involved/emerging-leaders-program](https://www.swcs.org/get-involved/emerging-leaders-program), and please send this opportunity to conservation professionals in their first five years. Participant feedback has been incredible, and most applicants learn about it from supervisors and colleagues — like you!

This summer, as elected officials return to their districts, it's a great time to showcase how federal programs support local conservation work. We know reaching out to lawmakers can feel intimidating. That's why on **Tuesday, July 29 at NOON CT**, SWCS is hosting a webinar: Capital to Counties—Making Conservation Visible to Elected Officials. We'll also unveil a new toolkit for legislative outreach and education. Register here: [swcs.org/events/calendar/capital-to-countiesmaking-conservation-visible-to-elected-officials](https://www.swcs.org/events/calendar/capital-to-countiesmaking-conservation-visible-to-elected-officials).

Conservation challenges are growing — and so is the need for strong, connected professionals like you. SWCS exists because of your commitment to healthier farms, communities, and landscapes. My ask is simple: keep showing up for yourself by leaning into your professional society. Connect, share, and be inspired — because soil and water need you more than ever.

Visit www.swcs.org and learn more about leaning in!

Thank you, Iowa SWCS!

Sincerely,
Clare Lindahl



Iowa Chapter members after helping with SWCS grounds cleanup on April 11, 2025.

SWCS Chapter Members Assist at State Envirothon

The state Envirothon competition was held Monday, April 28, at Jester Park Nature Center near Granger, Iowa. Several Iowa Chapter SWCS members were among the dozens of volunteers who assisted during the competition.

Fifteen high school Envirothon teams from throughout Iowa participated in the event. Testing was completed in topic areas including aquatic ecology, soils, forestry, wildlife and current issues. The current issue for this year was, "Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change". Each team researched the topic and scenario provided, developed a solution to the scenario and then gave a presentation to a panel of judges engaging all the team members.

For 2025, the overall winning team was from Decorah High School. The team's name was Decorah Load of Carp! This team will represent Iowa at the international competition being held July 20-26, at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, Canada!

Copied below is a link to information about the 2025 State Envirothon competition:



Iowa Envirothon winners Decorah Load of Carp compete in the Wildlife portion of the environmental competition.

<https://www.cdiowa.org/get-involved/envirothon/>

Congratulations to all who participated and the volunteers who helped make it happen.

Plant ID is Key

Summer is a great time to enjoy and observe lots of blooming plants. It is also an excellent time to find undesirable plants, the ones that out compete and take over stands. The key of knowing whether to enjoy or control a species is to first properly identify it. For example, Canada Thistle is an invasive perennial plant. Wild Bergamot is a native perennial plant commonly found in established native stands. Both bloom around the same time and both have purple flowers. One will happily co-exist with other native plants, the other outcompetes vegetation by spreading through rhizomes (underground lateral roots). See the links below for more information about each plant.

Canada Thistle- <https://plants.usda.gov/plant-profile/CIAR4>

Wild Bergamot- <https://plants.usda.gov/plant-profile/MOFI>

Wild Parsnip and **Poison Hemlock** are two toxic plants on the rise throughout Iowa that can result in rashes,

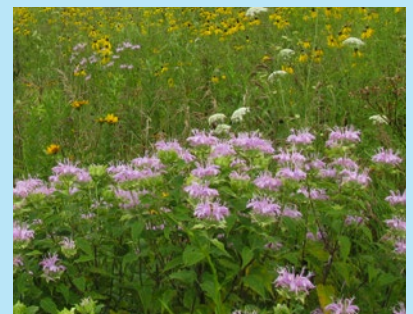
blisters, or worse if contacted with bare skin. Each has its own non-toxic look-alike(s). Be sure to properly identify a plant prior to handling it.

Wild Parsnip- <https://plants.usda.gov/plant-profile/PASA2>

Golden Alexanders

(look alike)- <https://plants.usda.gov/plant-profile/ZIAU>
Poison Hemlock- <https://plants.usda.gov/plant-profile/COMA2>

Queen Anne's Lace (look-alike)- <https://plants.usda.gov/plant-profile/DACA6>



Wild Bergamot in an Iowa prairie strip.

Outreach Events

Kids' Fest in Storm Lake

Storm Lake held its annual Kids' Fest at Chautauqua Park on Sunday, June 8th from 12-3pm. SWCS set up a booth covered by Jerry Neppel, Iowa SWCS Past President, and Kelsi Sieren, Iowa SWCS Northwest Area Chair. Jerry handed out butterfly and bee stickers, Bit-O-Honey candies, and quizzed the kids on the importance of pollinators while Kelsi assisted participants in making native plant starter packets.

The kids filled starter cups part way with soil, added a couple seeds each of Partridge Pea and Pale Purple Coneflower and closed the cups with tape to contain the contents until they got home. At that point, they could broadcast or shallowly bury the contents of the packet to start growing their own native plants which help feed the pollinators! Overall, about 100 seed packets were made and twice as many people visited the booth.



President-elect/Northwest Iowa Chair Kelsi Sieren helps a young boy at Kids' Fest on June 8 in Storm Lake.

Pollinator Palooza in Cumming



Jon Tesdell at the SWCS booth.

On Saturday, June 7, Ted Lare Design + Build Garden Center near Cumming, hosted a Pollinator Palooza event. Several garden and home landscaping vendors and non-profit organizations had booths and displays offering information and materials promoting pollinator habitat. Iowa Chapter members Jon Tesdell and Jerry Neppel staffed the SWCS booth providing print information and resource links to conservation agencies. Visitors to the booth were urban and suburban homeowners and small acreage owners. Approximately 50 people stopped by the booth.

Iowa Conservation Team Ready for RAGBRAI LII

Once again, the Iowa Conservation Team will be setting up along the RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa) route. Riders can get a free banana, fill up water bottles (if water is available at the site), and fill out conservation-themed postcards to send to family or friends. It's a northern route this year, and one of our tent sites is actually in Minnesota! If you're riding, we hope to see you; if you know someone else riding RAGBRAI this year, encourage them to stop by!

Here are the locations of tent sites for 2025:

Monday, July 21

49871 715th Street
Jackson, MN

Tuesday, July 22

5181 Highway 9
Dolliver, IA

Wednesday, July 23

IDNR Ventura Marsh (west side of the road)
300 S Main Street
Ventura, IA

Thursday, July 24

33492 Hwy 57
Aplington, IA

Friday, July 25

8242 E Dunkerton Rd
Dunkerton, IA



Iowa SWCS Summer Meeting in Winterset on Aug. 21

The Iowa Chapter of SWCS hosts at least two meetings for members each year; the annual meeting in the fall and the summer meeting which rotates around the Iowa Chapter's five areas. This year, it's the Central Area's turn to host the summer meeting.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, August 21, in Winterset. Part of the meeting will be held at the new Madison County Conservation Center in Pammel Park, which just opened this spring.

As soon as the agenda and registration details have been finalized, information will be emailed to members, posted on social media and our website at iaswcs.org.



The new Madison County Conservation Center in Pammel Park will be one of the locations for the Iowa SWCS Chapter summer meeting on Aug. 21.

Iowa SWCS Events Calendar

- » **July 20-27:** RAGBRAI LII. Iowa Conservation Team will have the tents set up Monday-Friday to distribute bananas, water and the conservation message to riders.
- » **July 30-31:** Iowa Women in Agriculture Conference at FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny
- » **August 3-6:** 80th SWCS International Annual Conference in Costa Mesa, California
- » **August 21:** Iowa SWCS Summer Meeting in Winterset
- » **September 9-10:** Iowa Water Conference at FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny
- » **October 15-16:** Upper Mississippi River Conference in Moline, Illinois
- » **November 19-20:** Iowa Nature Summit at Drake University in Des Moines

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