

Iowa Chapter Newsletter

Soil & Water Conservation Society
May 2026



SOIL
AND WATER
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY

Kelsi Sieren President's Report



Kelsi Sieren, Iowa SWCS Chapter President

Hello! I hope you are all having a pleasant spring. With some of the storms that have rolled through in the past month, I am reminded of the importance of good land stewardship and the need to advocate for healthy soil and clean water. Heavy rainfall can erode exposed soil, which in turn washes into rivers and other water systems.

There are many ways to evoke awareness of these issues and their science-based solutions. One way is through days of recognition that celebrate Earth and its natural components. A few examples include:

- World Water Day: March 22nd
- Earth Day: April 22nd
- Arbor Day: Last Friday of April (April 24th, 2026)
- Soil and Water Conservation Week: April 26th-May 3rd, 2026
- World Soil Day: December 5th

Celebrating and enjoying nature and all it has to offer shouldn't be restricted to a few designated days. Rather, it should be cherished every single day. Go for a hike, watch the sun rise or set, plant a tree or native forbs, listen to the birds sing, and continue being a proponent for conservation. Happy American Wetlands Month! Now go pick up some trash.



Picture of SWCS Headquarters Clean-up Crew on April 10, 2026: Courtesy of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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2026 Memorial Scholarship: Applications Now Open!

Do you—or someone you know—need a hand with college tuition? You've come to the right place! **Iowa SWCS** is officially accepting applications for our **2026 Memorial Scholarship**, and we want to help you reach your academic goals.

Don't let this opportunity slip away. Whether you're a student or know a deserving candidate, now is the time to act!



Apply for the Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Society Memorial Scholarship

Two \$1,500 scholarships available

**Application Deadline:
May 18, 2026**

Download an application online at <http://iaswcs.org/student-scholarships>

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a resident of Iowa **OR** be a student registered at a college in Iowa;
- Be employed in a natural resources-related field in Iowa for a minimum of one year **OR** have completed a full year of college coursework in a natural resources-related field;
- Be enrolled in the upcoming fall term.

APPLICATION

Components required in the application packet:

- Application form;
- Applicant essay;
- Letter of recommendation from an employer or educator;
- College transcripts.

Any Questions?

Contact Miranda: miranda.haes@dnr.iowa.gov or call/text (515) 204-3485

Iowa SWCS Summer Meeting

Friday, June 12, 2026

Nahant Marsh Education Center

4220 Wapello Avenue, Davenport, IA 52802 | Phone: 563-336-3370

Join conservation professionals for a full day of learning, discussion, and field experience at Nahant Marsh – one of the largest wetland complexes on the Mississippi River. Explore soil health, water quality, habitat restoration, climate resilience, and navigation infrastructure.

Cost: Free, thanks to sponsors!

Registration Information: RSVP to Anshu Singh at anshu.singh@cornbeltports.com

Those wishing to attend the tour of Lock & Dam 15 are required to RSVP no later than **Tuesday, June 1**

Other Info: Photo ID and closed-toe shoes are required for the tour.

Agenda

- 9:30 AM Check in, networking, and morning refreshments
- 10:00 AM Welcome & Introductions
- 10:15 AM Nahant Marsh Site Overview
 - Brian Ritter, Executive Director, Nahant Marsh Education Center
- 10:45 AM Climate Outlook
 - Ray Wolf, retired NOAA scientist
- 11:15 AM Working River & Infrastructure
 - Bob Sinkler, Executive Director, Corn Belt Ports; and Anshu Singh, Director Sustainability, Corn Belt Ports
- 12:00 PM LUNCH – catered by Panera Bread
- 1:00 PM Depart for Tour (15-minute drive)
- 1:30 PM Tour of Locks & Dam 15 – gain insight into navigation infrastructure and river management!
 - Guided by the US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District.
- 4:00 PM Post Meeting Social: Stompbox Brewing located at 210 E River Dr, Davenport, IA.

THANK YOU SPONSORS!



To join SWCS, visit www.swcs.org/join or join on site at the meeting.

Learn more about the Iowa Chapter at www.iaswcs.org and @iaswcs on Facebook and Twitter!

Questions? Contact Anshu Singh (SE Area Chair) at 4194810706 (cell), or Kelsi Sieren (Chapter President) at sierenkelsi@gmail.com.

Iowa Conservation Team Prepares for RAGBRAI LIII

by Anna Golightly

The Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI) is coming up the week of July 18-25, which means the Iowa Conservation Team is gearing up for our annual tradition of setting up along the route! The Iowa Conservation Team (including partners from the Iowa Chapter of SWCS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, the Iowa Department of Transportation, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Milkweed Matters, and others) works together to plan this major outreach operation every year.

The Iowa Conservation Team sets up along the route, usually each weekday if we can find a suitable location. We hand out free bananas (around 6,000!), provide a place to fill water bottles (if water is available on site), and have fun conservation-themed postcards for riders to fill out that we will mail for them (nearly 3,000 last year!). It's also a great opportunity to highlight nearby conservation practices and answer riders questions about agriculture and conservation.

Right now, we have asked local staff along the route to scope out potential sites where we can set up along the route and contact landowners to see if they would be willing to host the Iowa Conservation Team during RAGBRAI. After we have sites confirmed, we'll be looking for volunteers to help each day. If you're interested in volunteering, contact Anna Golightly at Anna.Golightly@ia.nacdnet.net to get connected to a Team Leader in your area.

During the week of RAGBRAI, our "Van Master" (retired NRCS Agricultural Economist Alan Lauver) sets out across the state, hauling our canopy tents, water bottle filling station, and picking up banana orders along the way. Alan will meet the teams of local volunteers on site in the morning, and after the riders have passed, they'll pack up, haul out the trash and banana peels, and mail the postcards.



Though sites haven't been chosen yet, we anticipate having the tents set up early in the route on the following days:

- Monday, July 20 – leaving Harlan
- Tuesday, July 21 – leaving Guthrie Center
- Wednesday, July 22 – leaving Boone
- Thursday, July 23 – leaving Marshalltown
- Friday, July 24 – leaving Dyersville

If you're riding on RAGBRAI, we hope you'll stop by and visit. If you have family or friends riding, remind them to watch for the Iowa Conservation Team along the route.

The Iowa Conservation Team has been working together on this effort for more than 20 years now, and we look forward to continuing this tradition in 2026!

Celebrate Iowa's Outdoors Day at the Capitol

Celebrate Iowa's Outdoors Day was held at the Iowa State Capitol on March 24, 2026, bringing together individuals and organizations committed to protecting Iowa's natural resources and promoting outdoor recreation.

Iowa SWCS was represented by Jon Tesdell, Southwest Area Chair, who shared the following update from the event: "I attended Iowa Outdoors Day at the State Capitol and brought a box of SWCS materials for distribution. The event was well attended, with most booklets and several membership applications and stickers picked up by participants. Three elected representatives addressed the audience, along with members of various Iowa conservation and environmental organizations. Throughout the day, attendees also had opportunities to meet with their House Representative or Senator regarding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, which was approved by voters in 2010 but has not yet received funding."



Photo Courtesy of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

2 For U Childcare Earth Day Event

On Saturday, April 18th, 2 For U Childcare in Ankeny held an Earth Day event. Iowa SWCS was asked to be a partner and provide expertise at the 'Dig into Dirt' station. Jerry Neppel and Kelsi Sieren taught the importance of soil while the participants dug through and found fake critters and rocks in the soil. There were even live worms for the kids to see and touch! Other stations included the life cycle of insects, reading books about the Earth, a paper craft to create an image of planet Earth, and planting the seed of a flower to take home and watch grow.



Materials provided by 2 For U Childcare. Photo by Jerry Neppel

Thank you to Forrest and Barrett Ludwig for digging up the worms!



81st SWCS International Annual Conference Registration Now Open



Be part of the 81st SWCS International Annual Conference, July 26-29, 2026, in St. Louis, Missouri! Engage with our conservation community of researchers, practitioners, industry leaders, farmers, and students from around the world as you explore the latest science and practices through workshops, tours, exhibits, and more.

Get full conference details, view the draft agenda, and register by **June 16** for early bird pricing discount at www.swcs.org/26AC.

Note: Please wait to register until you have full approval to attend, cancellations will incur a fee.

[Register Today](#)

Boost Your Organization's Visibility

Be part of the 81st SWCS International Annual Conference and connect with top conservation professionals from across sectors. Showcase your products, services, and solutions to a diverse, engaged audience by securing your spot by **June 12** as an exhibitor or sponsor.

[View Opportunities](#)

SWCS Member Benefits - Community Content Hub!

In the next section, we want to highlight a member benefit. This information is located on the member webpage. Navigate to the [SWCS member login](#). You may need to reset your password to access this and other useful resources!

Be sure to utilize the **SWCS Community Content Hub**—your one-stop destination for tools, templates, and inspiration to grow your impact in conservation. Whether you're a chapter leader, student, or member looking to bring people together, the new hub makes it easier than ever to find what you need to plan events, strengthen outreach, and build community. Explore member-exclusive resources, like:

Chapter Operations – Chapter basics, template budgets, sample meeting agendas, officer roles and responsibilities, efficient meeting strategies, and more!

Outreach and Communications – Template social media calendar, SWCS brand guide, website building tools, template graphics, and more!

Event Planning – Event flyer templates, offering CEUs, tour toolkit, template speaker and attendee emails, event planning checklist, networking event toolkit, and more!

Growing Community – Recruitment tools, template member survey, template welcome email, and more!

Student Chapters – Governance resources, student event planning tools, Student and Affiliate Organization Guide, and more!

Iowa SWCS Events Calendar

- » **April 26-May 3: Soil and Water Conservation Week**
- » **May 21: Iowa Chapter Board Meeting**
- » **June 12: Iowa Chapter's Summer Meeting in Davenport, IA**
- » **June 14: Kid's Fest in Storm Lake, IA**
- » **June 23: National Soil Health Day**
- » **July 18-25: RAGBRAI**
- » **July 26-29: 81st SWCS International Annual Conference in St. Louis, MO**
- » **August 6: Iowa Women in Agriculture Annual Conference**
- » **August 20: Iowa Chapter Board Meeting**
- » **September 16-17: Iowa Water Conference, Okoboji, IA**
- » **December 5: World Soil Day**

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