Announcement of 2018 NCSS Award Recipients

The Soil Science Division is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2018 National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) Awards. (The awards will be formally presented at the 2018 Regional NCSS Conferences.)

Jennifer Mason and Daniels Perkins are the recipients of the NCSS Soil Scientist of the Year Award.

Jennifer (Jenn) Mason is the MLRA Soil Survey Leader in Clinton, TN, Soil Survey Region 6. Jenn was born and raised on a beef cattle and hog farm in Bledsoe County, TN, located in the Sequatchie Valley. Her first job was a farmer. Regretfully, Jenn says, “I was one of many generations that could not continue the family business”. Jenn graduated from Tennessee Technological University in 1997 and accepted a soil conservation technician position for the Knox County Soil Conservation District. While working with the district conservationist, the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts, and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, she was able to keep in touch with the business of farming and learn the value of establishing cooperative relationships with our customers and partners.

Jenn served on an ArcGIS pilot project that paved the way for the modern-day Customer Service Toolkit. In 1999, she became a county soil scientist for Roane County, TN. A year later, Jenn joined the NRCS soil survey staff in Morgan, Scott, Roane, and Anderson counties to work on initial, extensive revision, and what was called “maintenance” soil surveys. She was the lead project leader for the Soil Resource Inventory of the Big South Fork National River and Recreational Area and thoroughly enjoyed working with the National Park Service. Jenn says “I have been a project leader longer that I can remember, so dates aren’t important there. What is important? The relationships with soil scientists, partners, and our customers across the nation. It is one of many reasons I love this job, and why I love leading the National Cooperative Soil Survey Communications Focus Team. We have so much to offer, and I believe in the service and products we provide to the public. Many thanks to those who nominated me for this award.”

Daniel (Dan) Perkins is the MLRA Soil Survey Leader in Pinedale, Wyoming, Soil Survey Region 4. Dan earned a bachelor's degree from Montana State University in Land Reclamation and Soil Science. He began his career with NRCS Soil Survey in 2004 initial mapping on the Wind River Soil Survey in Riverton, Wyoming. He then moved on to mapping the Meagher County Soil Survey in White Sulphur Springs, Montana. Dan went on to earn a post baccalaureate certificate from Penn State World Campus in GIS with support from Montana NRCS. During the MLRA office reshuffle Dan moved to Richfield, Utah as the Project Leader for the Kane County Soil Survey. With Kane County mapping complete Dan took the MSSL position in Flagstaff, Arizona. The Flagstaff office went on to complete the Little Colorado Soil Survey, and 3 National Monuments: Sunset Crater, Walnut Canyon, and Wupatki. Dan went on to become a certified ATV instructor with support from Arizona NRCS. After one year of SDJR and field update projects in Flagstaff Arizona, Dan took the MSSL position in Pinedale, Wyoming. The Pinedale, Wyoming office currently has 4 ongoing initial soil surveys and over 6 million acres to map. Dan, along with both the Pinedale Wyoming and Fort Collins Colorado offices, operates multiple mapping crews in 3 counties, hosts summer mapping details, and maps with Wyoming Area Resource Soil Scientists. Additionally, Dan Perkins and Bryan Christensen, ESD Specialist in Pinedale Wyoming, operate a range field data collection program with University of Wyoming students for ESD development. This collaboration has produced 1 million acres of new mapping, and 1.2 million acres of ESD development in the last 3 years. Additionally, Dan and the Pinedale office have initiated 2 DSM projects with the BLM in remote areas and identified accelerated acreage projects with the Forest Service to help meet the 2026 deadline. This success is due to great local staff in Pinedale Wyoming: Dillon Gray, Project Leader, Bryan Christensen, ESD Specialist, and Kim Cumella, Soil Scientist. As well as Kari Sever and John Norman, Soil Scientists in Fort Collins Colorado, Dan Mattke, Area Resource Soil Scientist in Riverton Wyoming, and the Region 4 office in Bozeman Montana. Dan remarks "We are always looking for motivated soil scientists wanting to initial map on detail, so keep us and other offices looking for details in mind next summer."

William Svetlik and James Turenne are the recipients of the NCSS Soil Scientist Achievement Award.

William (Bill) Svetlik is a MLRA Soil Survey Project Leader in Tucson, Arizona, Soil Survey Region 8. Bill received his B.S. in Urban Horticulture and Landscape Design from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois in 1980. He received his minor in Soil Science from Southern Illinois University in 1987. Bill has worked for over 30 years with the USDA SCS/NRCS in Tucson, Arizona as a soil scientist, project leader, and MLRA Project Leader (currently). From 1987 to 2004 he worked as a field soil scientist within the Southern Arizona Basin and Range Province in MLRA's 40 and 41 and mapped about 2.32 million acres. Early in his career, he developed and implemented guidelines and techniques to establish a better concept within MLRA-LRU- 41-1 the aridic ustic soil moisture regime in Southern Arizona. This included the establishment of 45 new official series for this moisture regime. He collected, documented, and wrote soil descriptions in support for a proposal to the classification staff for the addition of a new Petronodic subgroup to be added to the Aridisols. This proposal was incorporated into Soil Taxonomy. Bill provides training to NRCS employees and external customers on the evaluation and proper use of soil resources and the application of soil survey information via Web Soil Survey. This includes soils training to interns and new employees both in the soil survey office and field office (rangeland management specialist, soil conservationists and engineers). He has worked closely with rangeland management specialists to recognize plant-soil relationships and coordinate ecological site descriptions to map unit components. Bill participates in developing and maintaining a viable education program throughout Southern Arizona. This includes assisting in the educational activities of local high schools and colleges to promote interest in soils and natural resources. He has made 20 soil mini- monoliths for soil presentations and demonstrations. He has helped organize the soils section for the Willcox-San Simon NRCD annual FFA Riggs field day contest for 30 years. Bill prepares test questions, pit locations, class discussions and is a soil judge for the FFA contest. Throughout his career, Bill has completed 6 initial soil surveys and numerous special projects. Bill has collected over 10,000 data points and descriptions while amassing 5 million acres mapped and counting.

James (Jim) Turenne is the NRCS Assistant State Soil Scientist for Rhode Island. Jim attended the University of Rhode Island, graduating in 1987 with a major in Natural Resources. Jim began working with the Middlesex, MA Conservation District as a soil mapper for the county soil survey until it was completed. In 1989 Jim hired by the SCS as a field soil scientist (ground pounder) and the Ground-Penetrating Radar specialist for Massachusetts and transferred to Plymouth County, MA. He worked on the Plymouth County Soil Survey Update under Peter Fletcher and became the Project Leader for the update in 1993. Jim worked extensively on modernizing the soil survey by incorporating GPR to develop cranberry bed soil map units, using GPS to improve accuracy of soil mapping and geo-locate all data collected during the survey and provided all information via the Nesoil.com website which came out in 1996. He served as a member of the New England Hydric Soils Technical Committee which published the first regional hydric soil indicators in 1994. Jim attended the Soil Science Institute at NC State in 1996. In 2003 he transferred to RI NRCS as Assistant State Soil Scientist and was tasked by the State Conservationist to develop a Coastal Zone Soil Survey Center of Excellence. In 2010 RI published the 1st Coastal Zone Soil Survey and in 2012 the first freshwater soil survey. In 2010, Jim was awarded the Northeast National Cooperative Soil Survey Silver Spade Award. Currently, he is working on completing the spatial edits for the RI600 survey (for which he has been referred to as a Model-T), conducting TSS for RI, serving as secretary for the New England Hydric Soil Tech Committee (just published V4 of Indicators), serving on the CZSS focus team, and still getting out ground pounding.

Henry Langston is the recipient of the NCSS Cooperator Award.

Dr. Henry Langston recently retired from his position as Environmental Scientist with Arkansas Department of Transportation. A native of Bastrop, Louisiana, Dr. Langston graduated from Bastrop High School in 1970. He went on to obtain a B.S. degree in forestry/wildlife mgt. from Louisiana Tech University in 1974 followed by a Master's degree in botany in 1975. That was followed by Ph.D. degree in forestry/soil science from Louisiana State University in 1981. He served as an Assistant Professor in the forestry department at Oklahoma State University where he taught classes in forest ecology and silviculture. After three years at Oklahoma State University, Dr. Langston left to spend several years in the oil field and private business world. In a desire to return to the natural resources field he was employed as an Environmental Scientist in the Environmental Division of the Arkansas Department of Transportation. His primary duty was to assess upcoming highway department projects for potential impacts on wetlands and/or streams (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act). If wetlands and/or streams impacts were involved, he would perform a jurisdictional delineation to determine the extent of the impacts. Coordinating with the various state and federal agencies on the extent of the impacts and obtaining the necessary permits was part of the process. Obtaining required mitigation credits for the impacts was the next step in the process. The Arkansas Department of Transportation has over 30 wetland/stream mitigation banks or site-specific mitigation areas of its own. Dr. Langston was involved with the acquisition, mitigation plan, and monitoring on many of these sites. During his tenure at ArDOT. Dr. Langston had the opportunity to perform other duties as well. He was involved with several endangered species surveys to look at potential impacts from highway projects. Most notably was a month-long search for the Ivory-billed woodpecker back in 2006. The most recent involvement was assisting graduate students from Arkansas State University tracking radio tagged Indiana bats in northern Arkansas. He was involved with several cave surveys to determine what species of cave life were present and potential impacts from adjacent highway projects. Dr. Langston served several years as a member of the Arkansas Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team (MWAPT). During this time, he assisted with the sampling of wetlands statewide for the collection of data to be used in the development of the hydrogeomorphic (HGM) guide books for the five ecoregions of Arkansas. He has been involved with the group Archeological Assessments, Inc. in the past. Over the years the group worked with EPA grants handled through the Arkansas Department of Natural Heritage Commission. The goal of these projects

was to sample and describe the geomorphology of the various terrace levels along the Ouachita and Saline Rivers in southern Arkansas. Information obtained as a results of these projects was used to obtain a better understanding where wetlands could be found on these terraces. He assisted Dr. Robert H. Mohlenbrock in 2015 in the teaching of a wetland plant ID class. In 2017 he was one of the instructors along with Dr. Mike Vepraskas and Dr. Larry West in the teaching of a basic hydric soils class.

In addition to his highway duties, Dr. Langston has worked closely with NRCS soil scientists over the years. He attributes his close working relationship with the NRCS due to the cooperation he has had with the different state soil scientists: current Arkansas state soil scientist Edgar Mersiovsky and former state soil scientist Luis Hernandez, Louisiana state soil scientist Mike Lindsey and former state soil scientist Jerry Diagle and Delany Johnson, state soil scientist of Mississippi. In addition to Arkansas, Dr. Langston has traveled to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee on vacation time and his own expense to participate in the sampling and describing of numerous soil series during his career. Recently he has been working with NRCS's ecologists Barry Hart, Milan, TN and Charles Stemmans, Opelousas, LA and NRCS soil scientist Rachel Stout Evans, Greenwood, MS and others on various Ecological Descriptions. Areas that have been worked on include the Yazoo basin in Mississippi, Tensas basin in Louisiana, Macon Ridge in Arkansas and Louisiana, Western lowlands in Arkansas, and deep loess back slopes on Crowley's Ridge in Arkansas and Missouri. The next area to be sampled is the St. Francis basin in eastern Arkansas. He assisted in data collection for the NRCS's Rapid Soil Carbon Assessment initiated in 2010. In 2015 he worked with soil scientist from Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana in the digging and description of soil pits for the National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest. During 2017 Dr. Langston made several trips to Mississippi to work with soil scientists on a Level-1 soil mapping project of the NRCS's James Whitten Plant Material Center at Coffeeville. In addition to his working the field with NRCS soil scientists, he has had the opportunity to attend several NRCS training classes: hydric soils, advanced hydric soils, wetland delineation, soil correlation, and the soil geomorphic institute.

Dr. Langston is a registered professional soil classifier in Arkansas. He is a member and past president of the Arkansas Association of Professional Soil Classifiers as well as a member and current president of the Professional Soil Classifiers Association of Mississippi. He has also been involved with the Professional Soil Scientist Association of Texas. Dr. Langston is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in Arkansas. He is a member of the Scott Volunteers Fire Department where has served as a fire fighter for over 20 years.

Dr. Langston retired from his position with Arkansas Department of Transportation on April 17, 2018 after 25 years & 7months on the job. Currently he is working with the local District Conservationist to determine whether his 220-acre farm will qualify for enrollment into the NRCS's pollinator program. He looks forward to his next job as well as continuing his working and training relationship with the NRCS in the future.