NCSS Award Recipients Recognized at NCSS Meeting in Duluth, MN

The National Cooperative Soil Survey annual awards were presented to the recipients during the 2015 NCSS Conference held in Duluth, MN June 7-11, 2015. In 1999, the centennial year of the NCSS, the Soil Survey Division initiated two awards for scientists involved in the production phase of the soil survey program. These two awards are NCSS Soil Scientist of the Year and NCSS Soil Scientist Achievement. A third award, initiated in 2005, is given for NCSS cooperator achievement. The recipients of these awards for 2015 are:

**Jason Nemecek**, NRCS State Soil Scientist, Madison, WI, is the recipient of the **NCSS Soil Scientist of the Year Award**. This award recognizes Jason’s technical achievement leading to a significant advancement in soil survey, including, technical and conceptual enhancements of field mapping, map production, data analysis, and soil interpretation. Jason displays exceptional management of soil survey resources resulting in enhanced productivity, technical innovation, and soil survey quality. He is recognized for providing excellence in recruiting, training, and developing soil survey field staff. Jason’s exceptionally creative technical innovation, on projects and concepts, has significantly enhanced the art and science of soil survey.

**Paul Finnell**, NRCS Soil Scientist and National Soils Database Manager, National Soil Survey Center, Lincoln, NE, is the recipient of the **NCSS Soil Scientist Achievement Award**. Paul’s work impacts the production and application phases of the entire NCSS Program. He is responsible for NASIS and manages the database for the entire country. He writes reports, develops queries, and assists anyone who has a request for information that involves soils. Paul teaches soil scientists in basic, intermediate, and advanced NASIS, Correlation of Soil Surveys, and Basic Soil Survey. Paul has given exceptional leadership in the NCSS by developing methods for improving the soils database. He has also authored or assisted with the writing of many chapters and sections of the various Handbooks and National Instructions. He also served as business analyst for NASIS software development and testing and assists CDSI with mining of soils data for conservation planning.

**Dr. James Thompson**, Professor of Pedology and Land Use, Division of Plant and Soil Sciences, Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Design, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, is the recipient of the **NCSS Cooperator Achievement Award**. Dr. Thompson is a tireless advocate for partnerships that advance soil science, conservation, education, and the National Cooperative Soil Survey. Jim has promoted a strong partnership between West Virginia University, NRCS, and the US Forest Service that has resulted in many cooperative projects being undertaken. Jim’s teaching efforts at WVU include Soil Judging, Soil Survey and Land Use, Soil Genesis and Classification, Pedology, and Applied Wetland Ecology. He is the coach of the WVU Soil Judging Team leading his team to a national championship in 2006. For this accomplishment, the WVU soil judging was enshrined in the West Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame. Jim works closely with other soil scientists and conservationists in West Virginia, across the US, and around the world. Specific areas of study in soil science that interest him include soil management and land use planning, soils and landscapes, hydropedology, wetland identification and delineation, and soil spatial variability. Current efforts by Jim and his colleagues at WVU include developing techniques for enhancing soil maps via harmonization and disaggregation, and establishing ecological site inventories in the eastern U.S. starting with red spruce ecosystems to help interpret soil science information across disciplines. Jim also participates in the
GlobalSoilMap project. Jim also acts as liaison between the NRCS Geospatial Research Unit and West Virginia University. In this capacity, he has leveraged resources to develop cooperative research projects. Cooperative research projects have included modeling for development of ecological sites and soil organic carbon. Dr. Thompson is highly respected by both his peers in academia and within the NCSS.

Also recognized at the NCSS Conference was the St. Johnsbury, VT MLRA Soil Survey Office and the U.S. Forest Service. The staff in the St Johnsbury office – Robert Long, Jessica Philippe, Roger DeKett, and Martha Stuart – along with personnel from the U.S. Forest Service – Greg Nowacki, Andy Colter, and Erica Roberts – received the prestigious Two Chiefs Partnership Award. This award honors groups and individuals for outstanding efforts in conservation and forest stewardship. This partnership was recognized for their coordinated approach to identifying and recording natural resources and soil types in the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire by developing a way to better read the landscape using new technology to improve data collection efficiency and accuracy. The partnership was formed in 2011 to increase the understanding of soil-site-vegetation relations in the White Mountains with a collective goal of producing Terrestrial Ecological Units and Ecological Site Descriptions.

Awards Recipients (left to right): Jessica Philippe, Luis Hernandez (Acting SSD Director), Dr. Jim Thompson, Jason Nemecek, and Paul Finnell.